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Inoue et al.

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(54) **TRANSFER DEVICE, TRANSFER METHOD,
AND TRANSFER SYSTEM**

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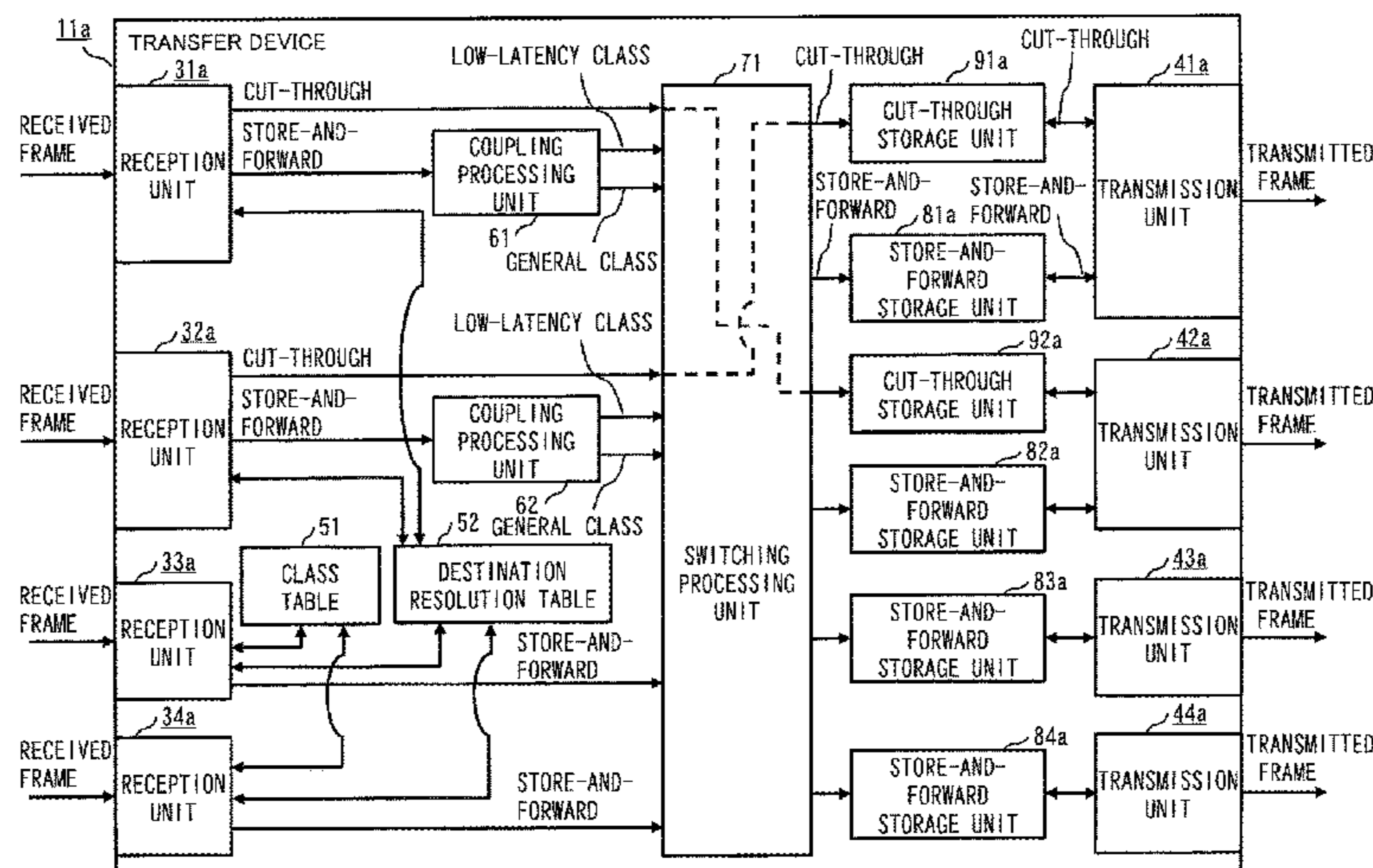
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& Birch, LLP

(57) **ABSTRACT**

A transfer device includes an output-port decision unit to
decide, on the basis of storage information stored in a frame
input, an output port from which the frame is output from
among a plurality of ports, an allocation unit to associate an
input port to which the frame is input with an output port
from which a frame which is transferred by a cut-through
method is output on a one-to-one basis, and allocate a first
frame to a first pathway transferring by the cut-through
method and allocate a second frame to a second pathway
transferring by a store-and-forward method on the basis of
type information of an input port to which a frame has been
input, class information of the frame, and the output port
decided by the output-port decision unit, and an IET-output
control unit to output the first frame from the output port,
decide whether to divide the second frame on the basis of the
class information of the second frame, and output the second
frame from the output port on the basis of decision. There-

(Continued)



fore, the transfer device can realize an IET low-latency transfer function by control simpler than that in the conventional transfer devices.

6 Claims, 20 Drawing Sheets

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H04L 12/947 (2013.01)
H04L 12/935 (2013.01)

(58) **Field of Classification Search**

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 See application file for complete search history.

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Fig. 1

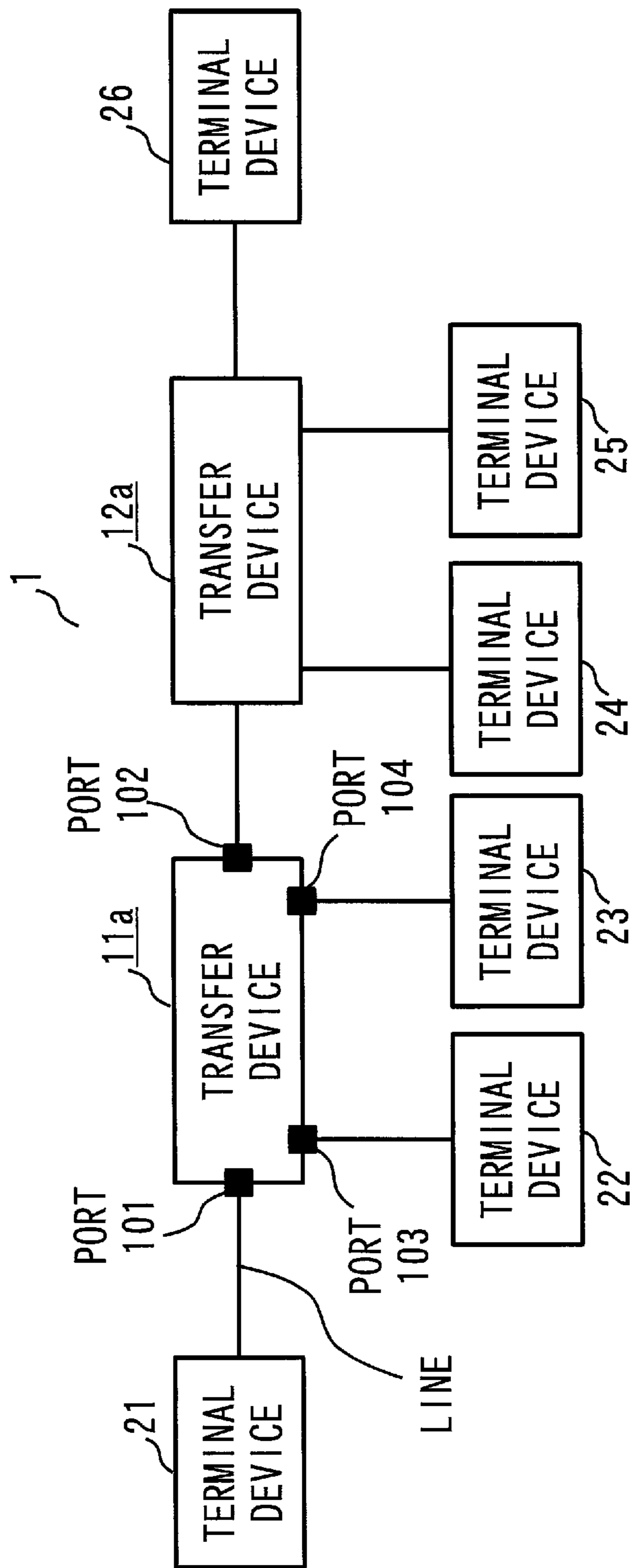


Fig. 2

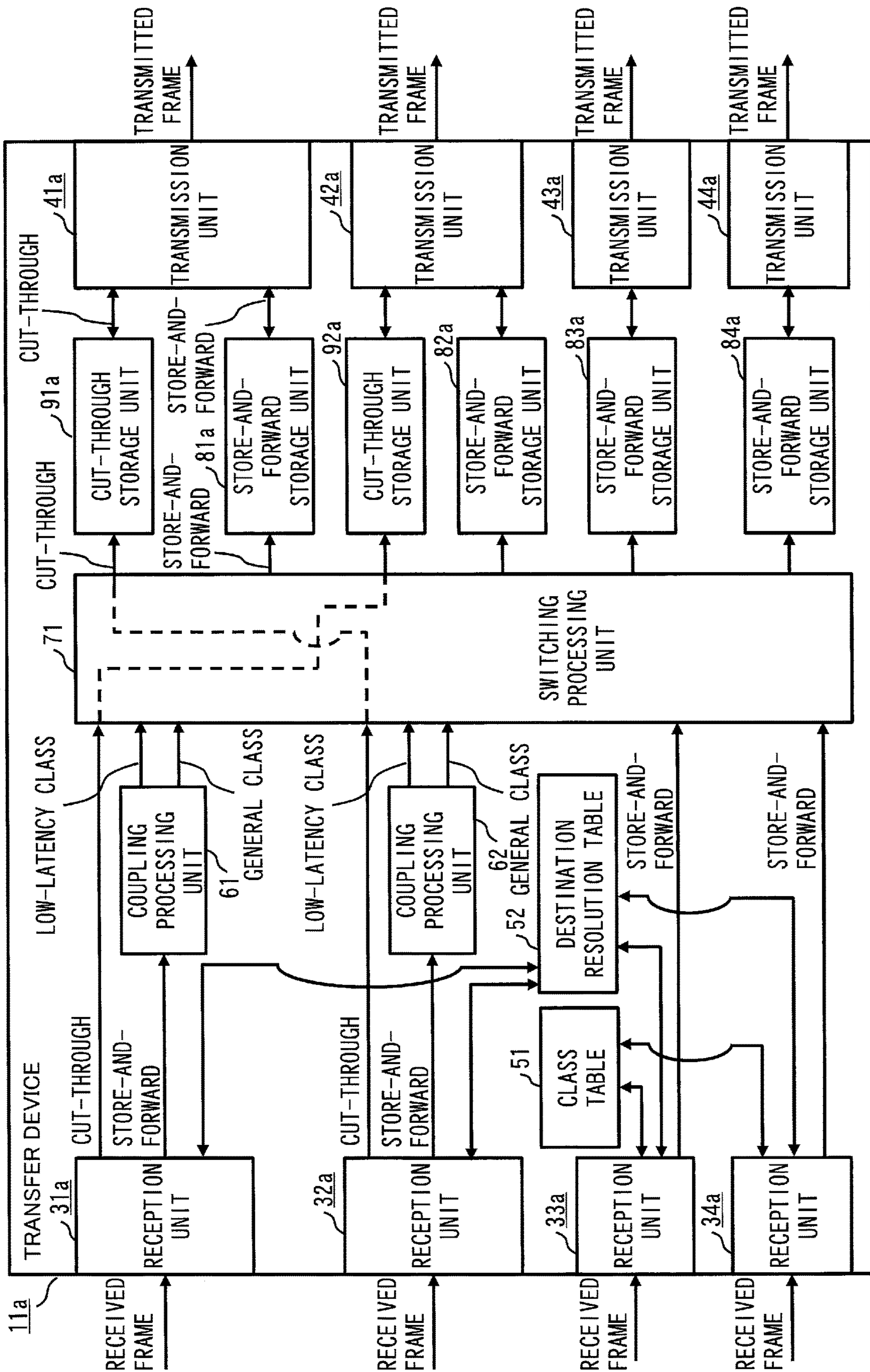


Fig. 3

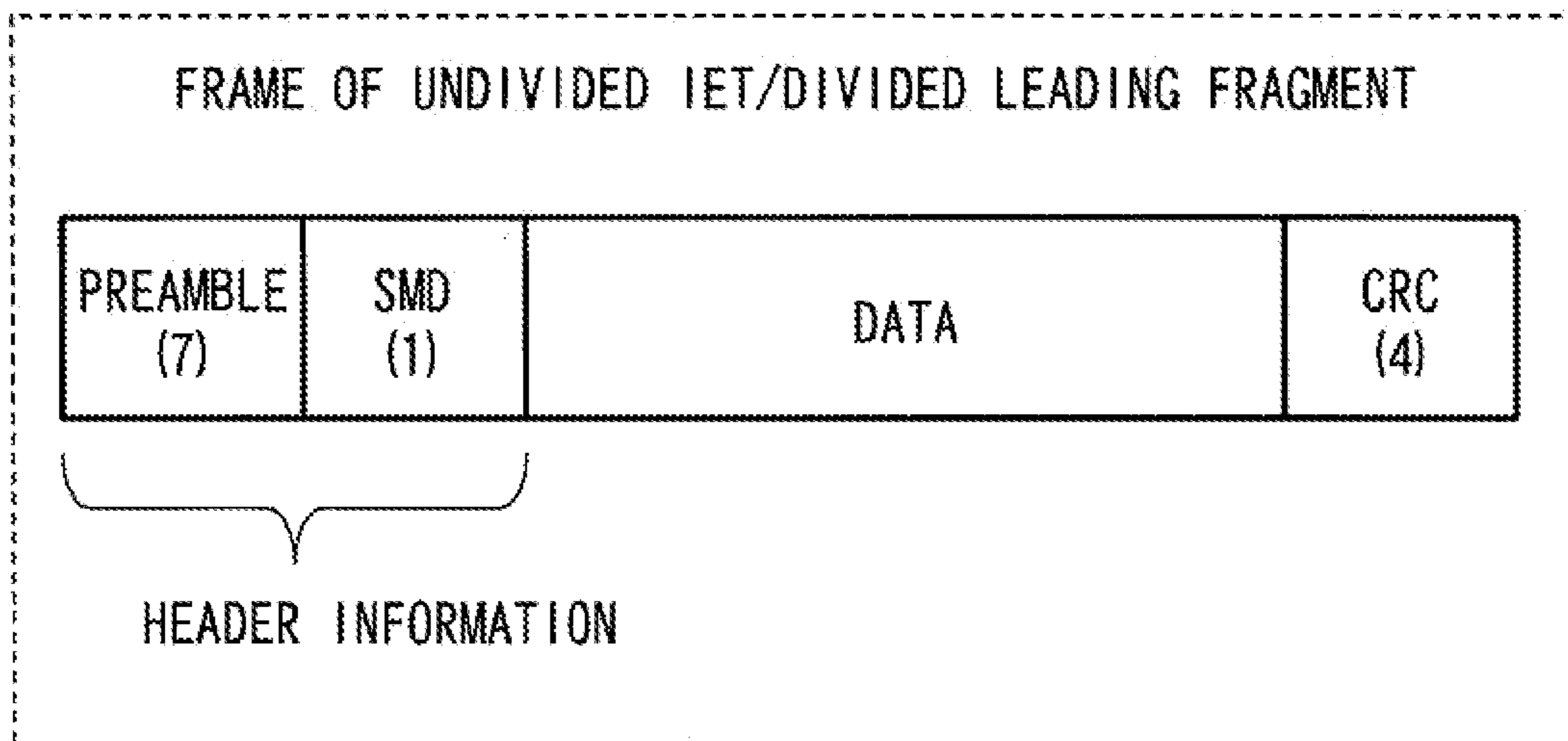


Fig. 4

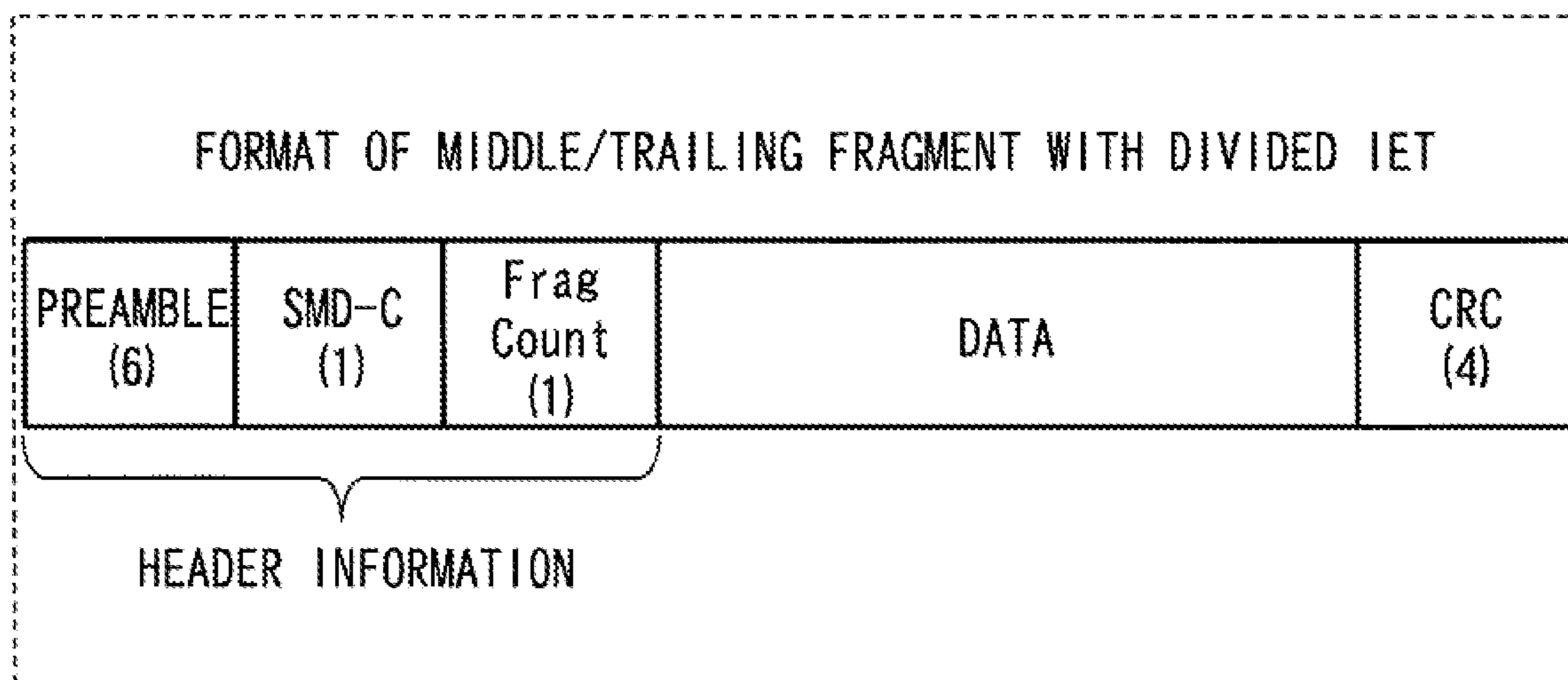


Fig. 5

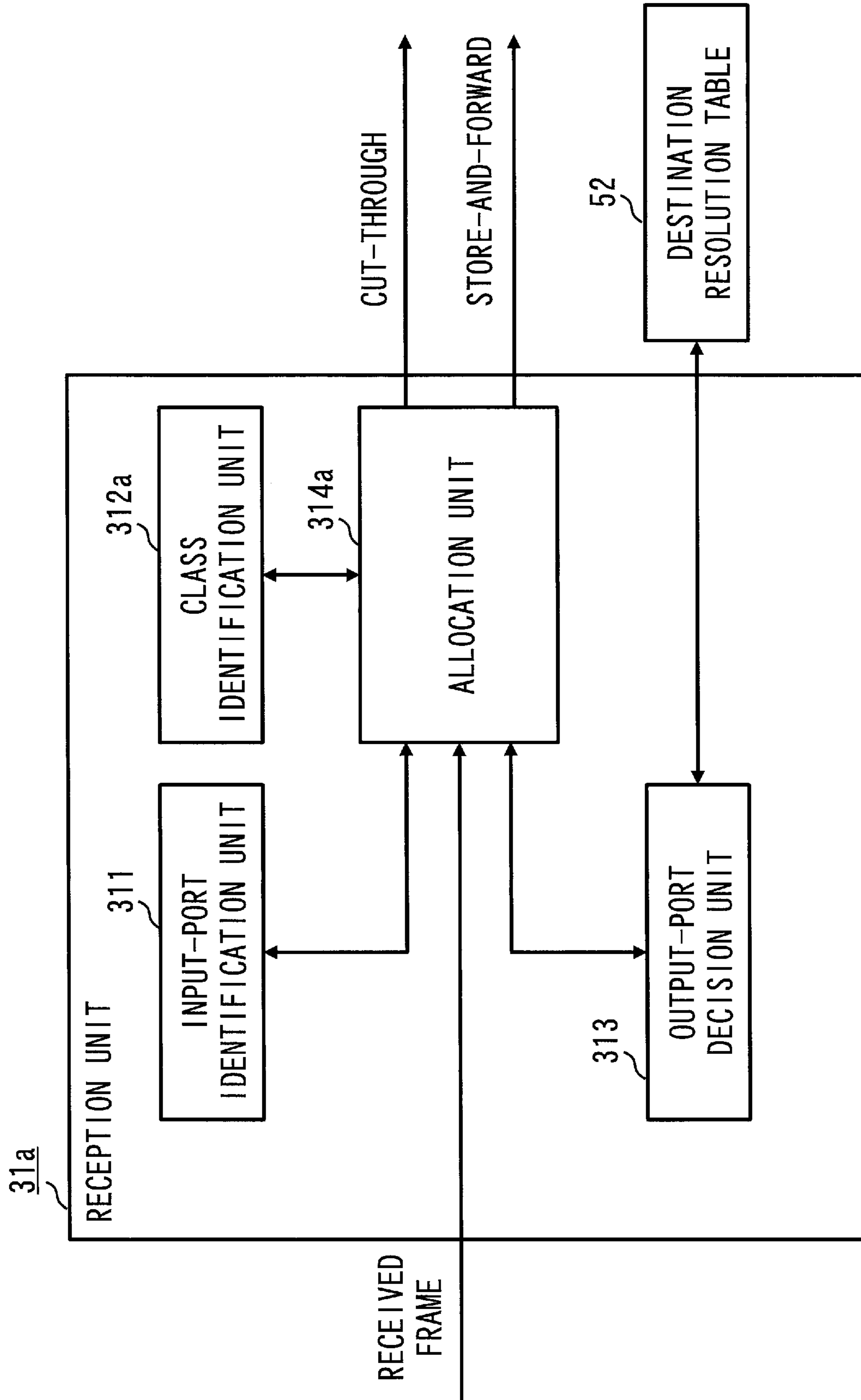


Fig. 6

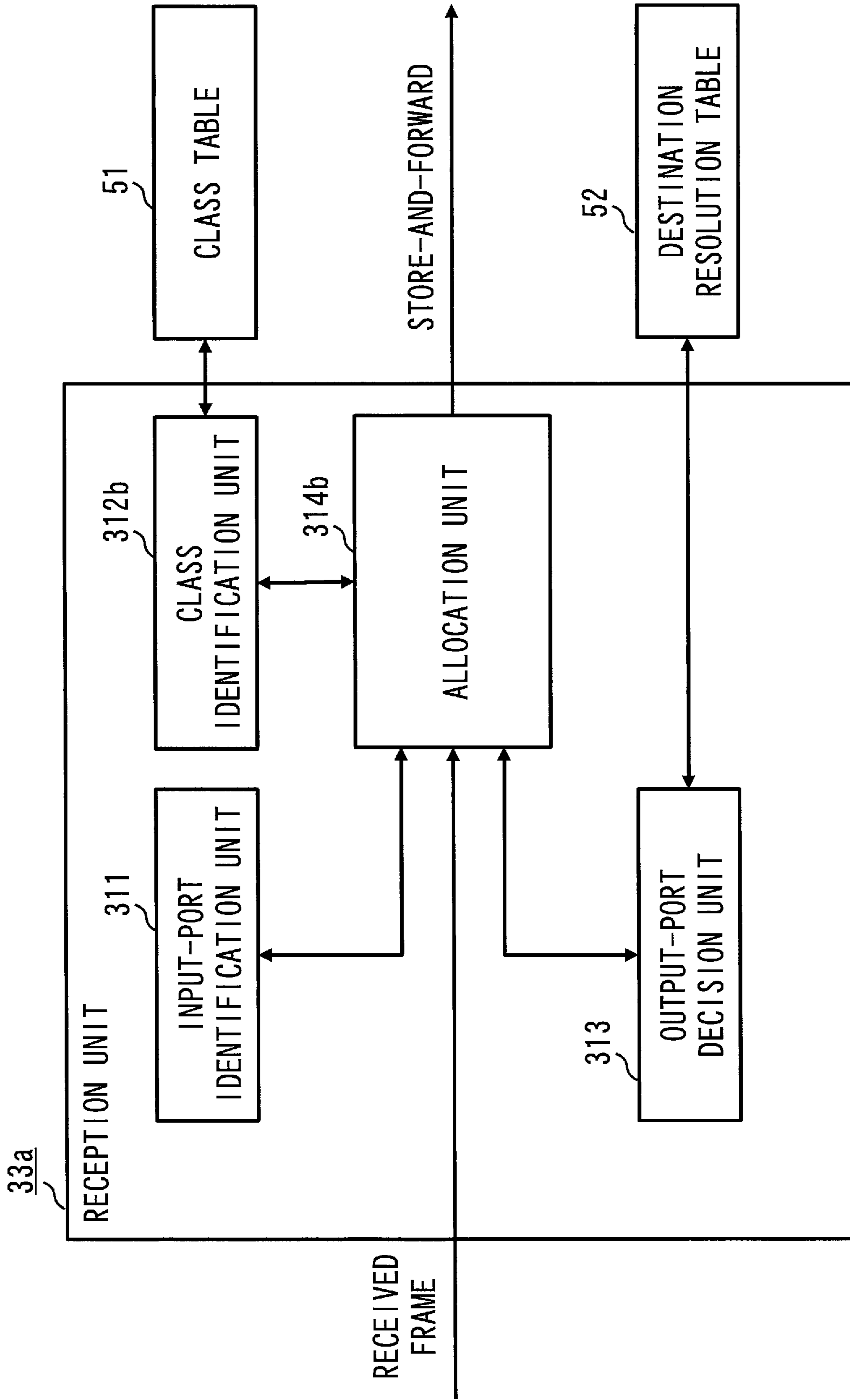


Fig. 7

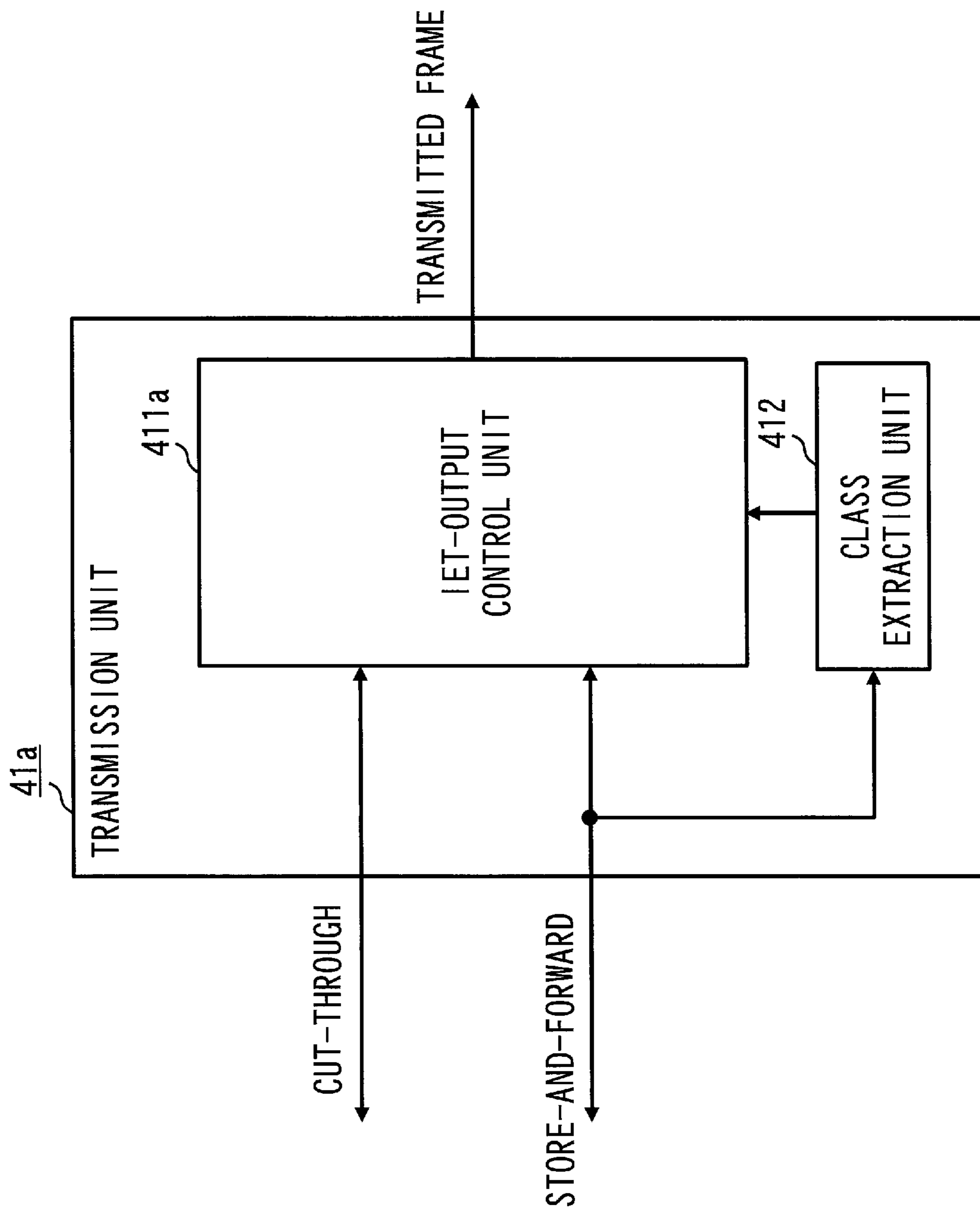


Fig. 8

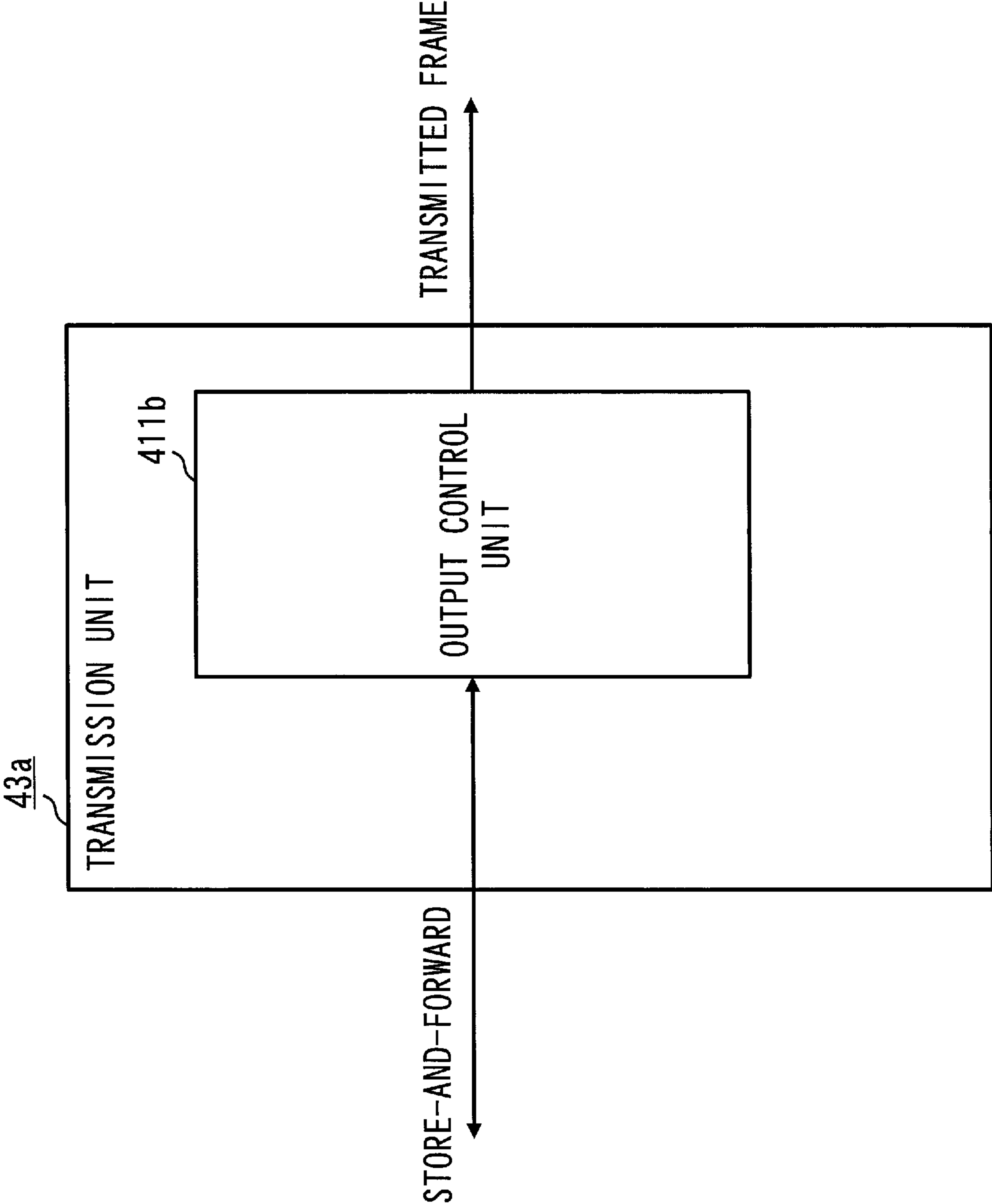


Fig. 9

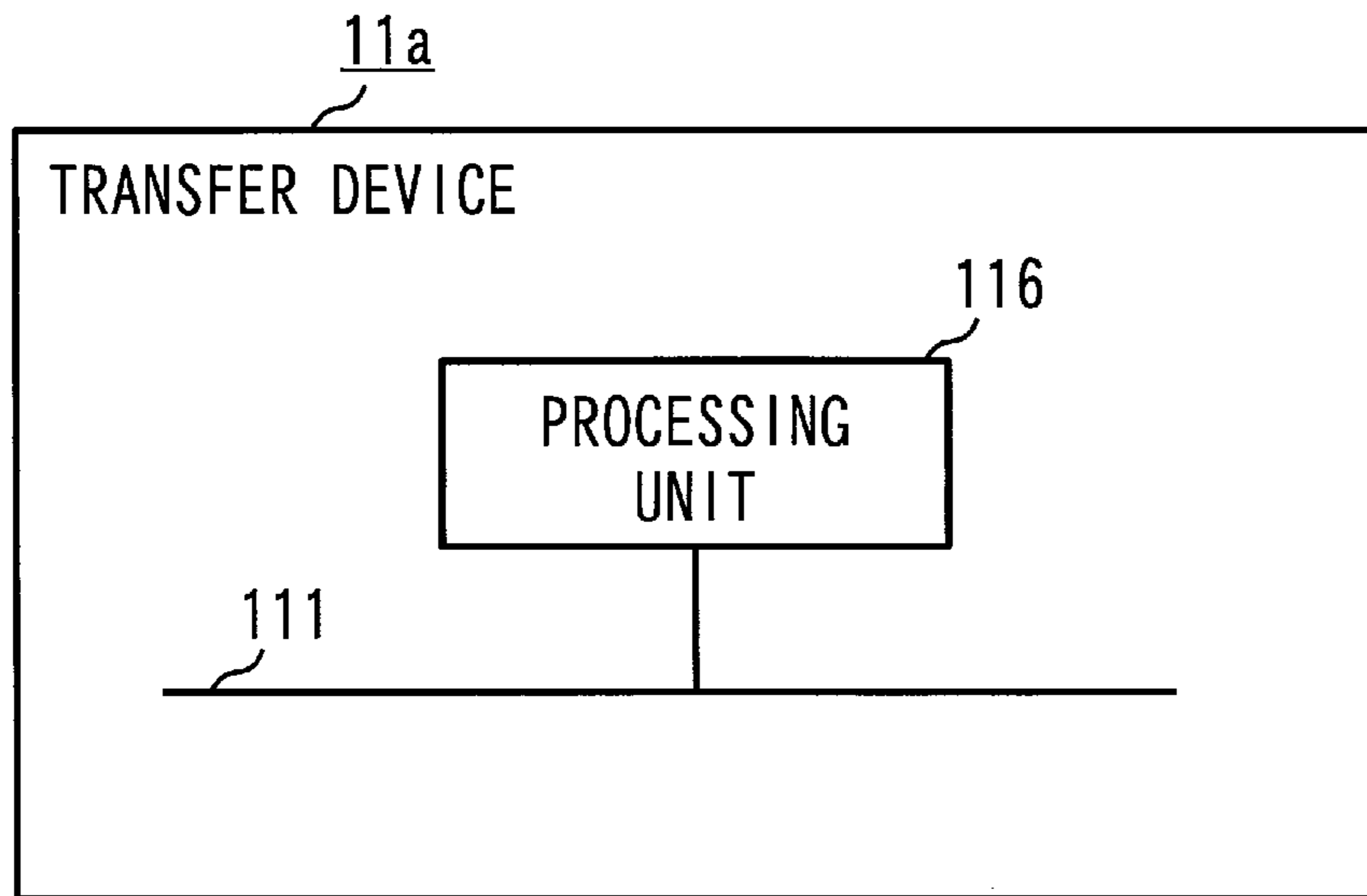


Fig. 10

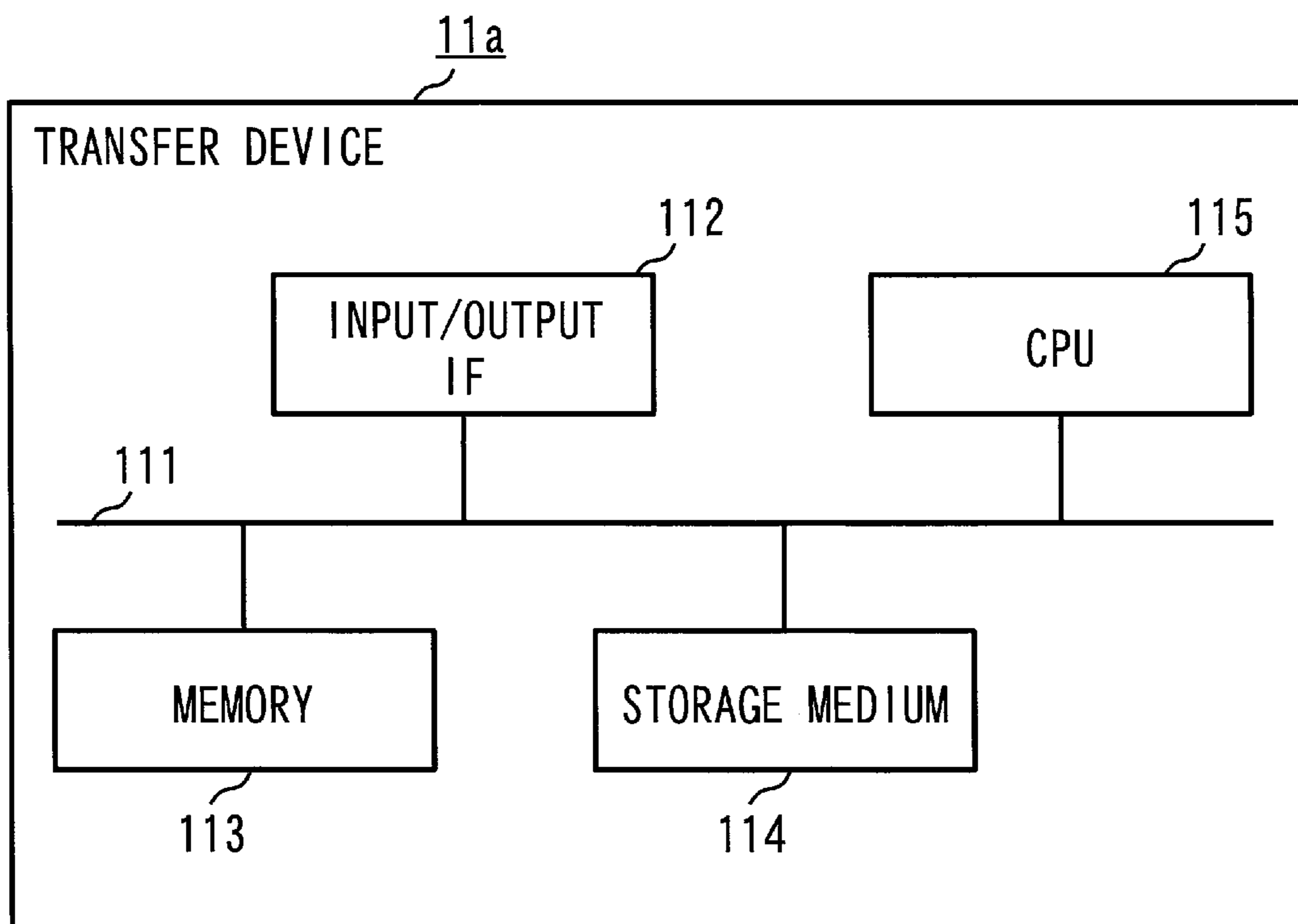


Fig. 11

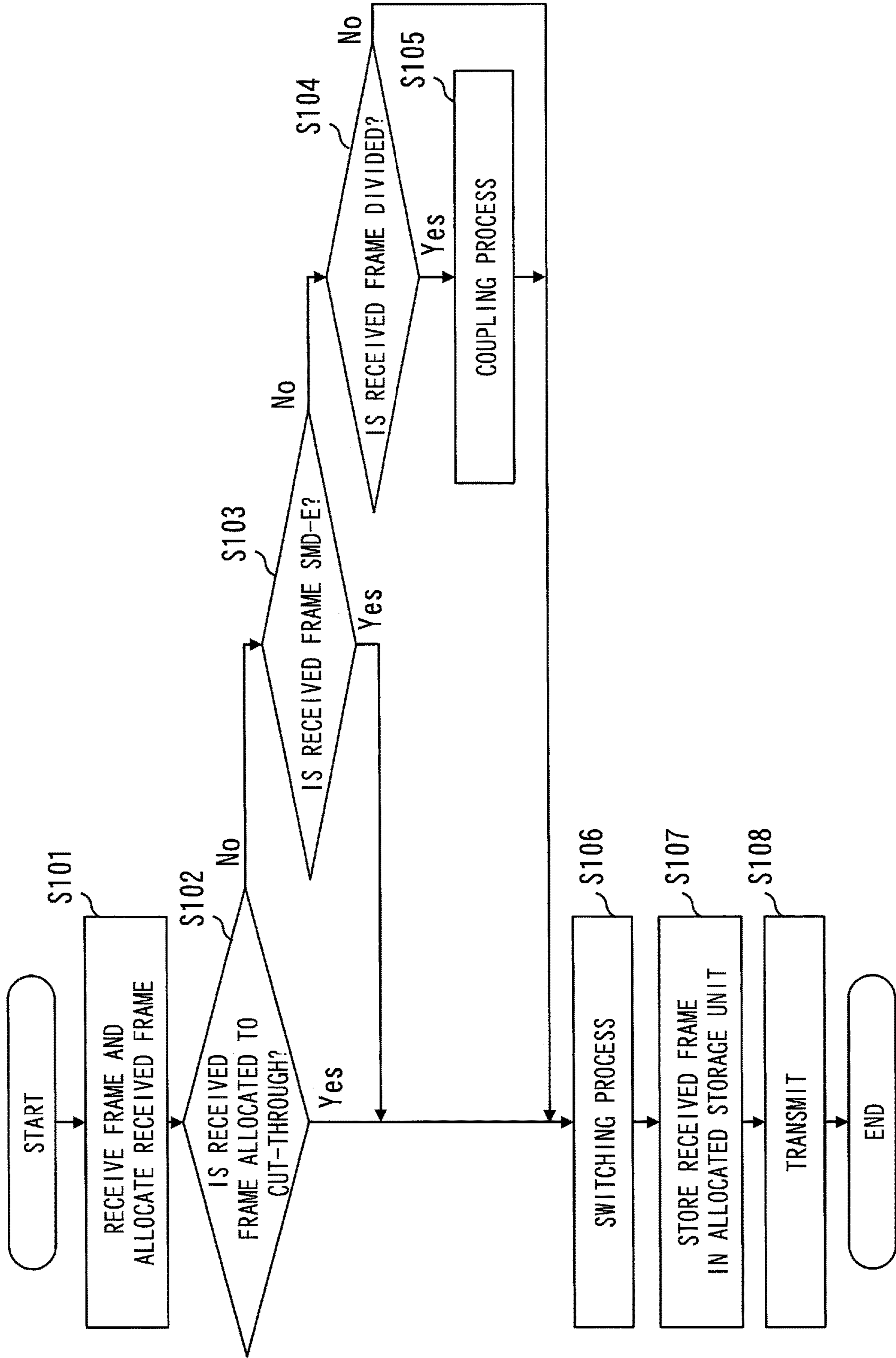


Fig. 12

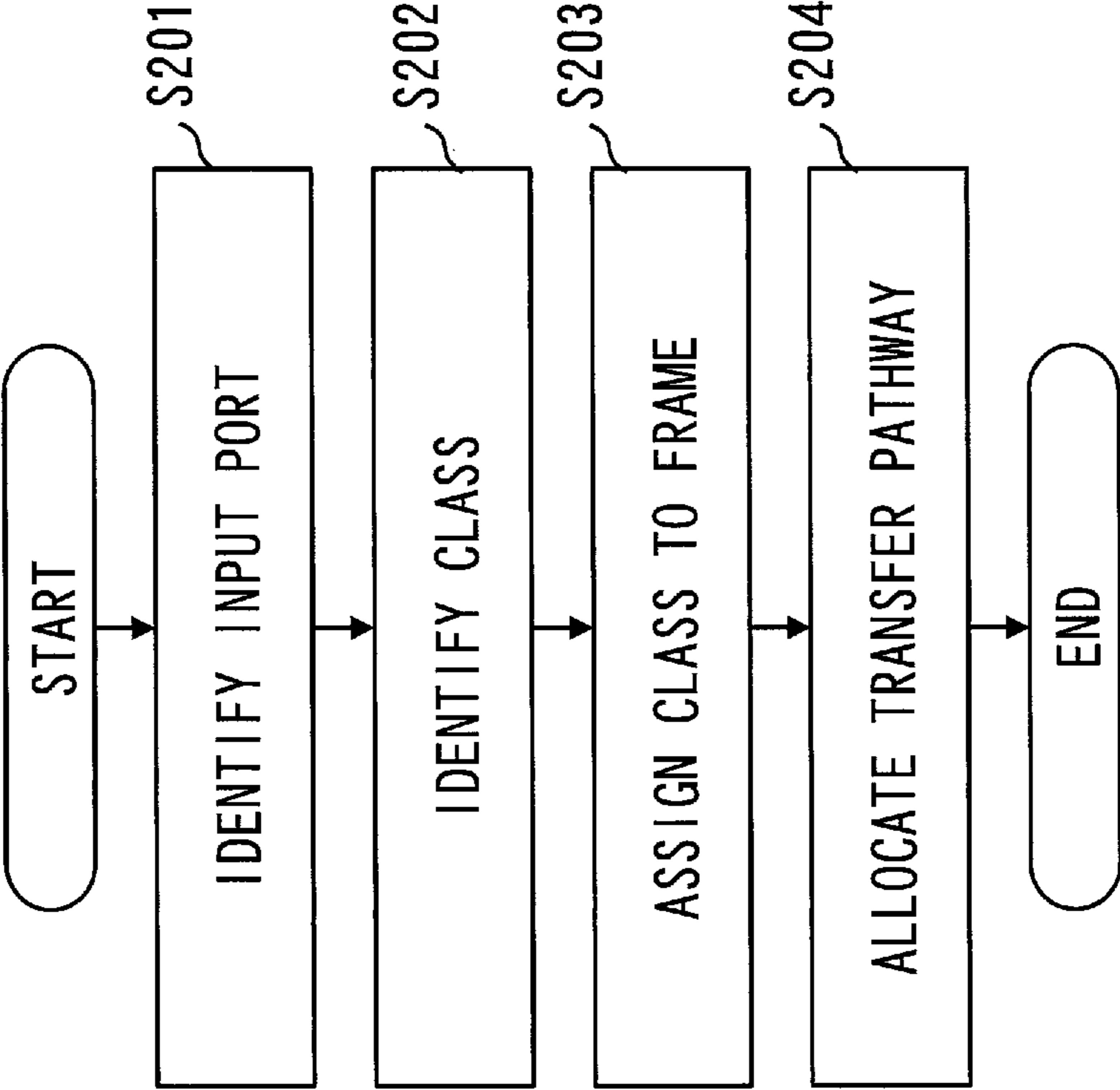


Fig.13

CLASS IDENTIFICATION BY SMD VALUE

SMD VALUE	CLASS
SMD-E	LOW-LATENCY
SMD-S	GENERAL
SMD-C	GENERAL

Fig.14

EXAMPLE OF CLASS TABLE
DESTINATION IP ADDRESS

DESTINATION IP ADDRESS	CLASS
AA. AA. AA. AA	LOW-LATENCY
CC. CC. CC. CC	GENERAL
...	...
ZZ. ZZ. ZZ. ZZ	GENERAL

Fig. 15

INPUT PORT FOR OUTPUT PORT PERFORMING CUT-THROUGH

INPUT PORT	OUTPUT PORT BITMAP			
	PORT 104	PORT 103	PORT 102	PORT 101
PORT 101	0	0	1	0
PORT 102	0	0	0	1
PORT 103	0	0	0	0
PORT 104	0	0	0	0

Fig. 16

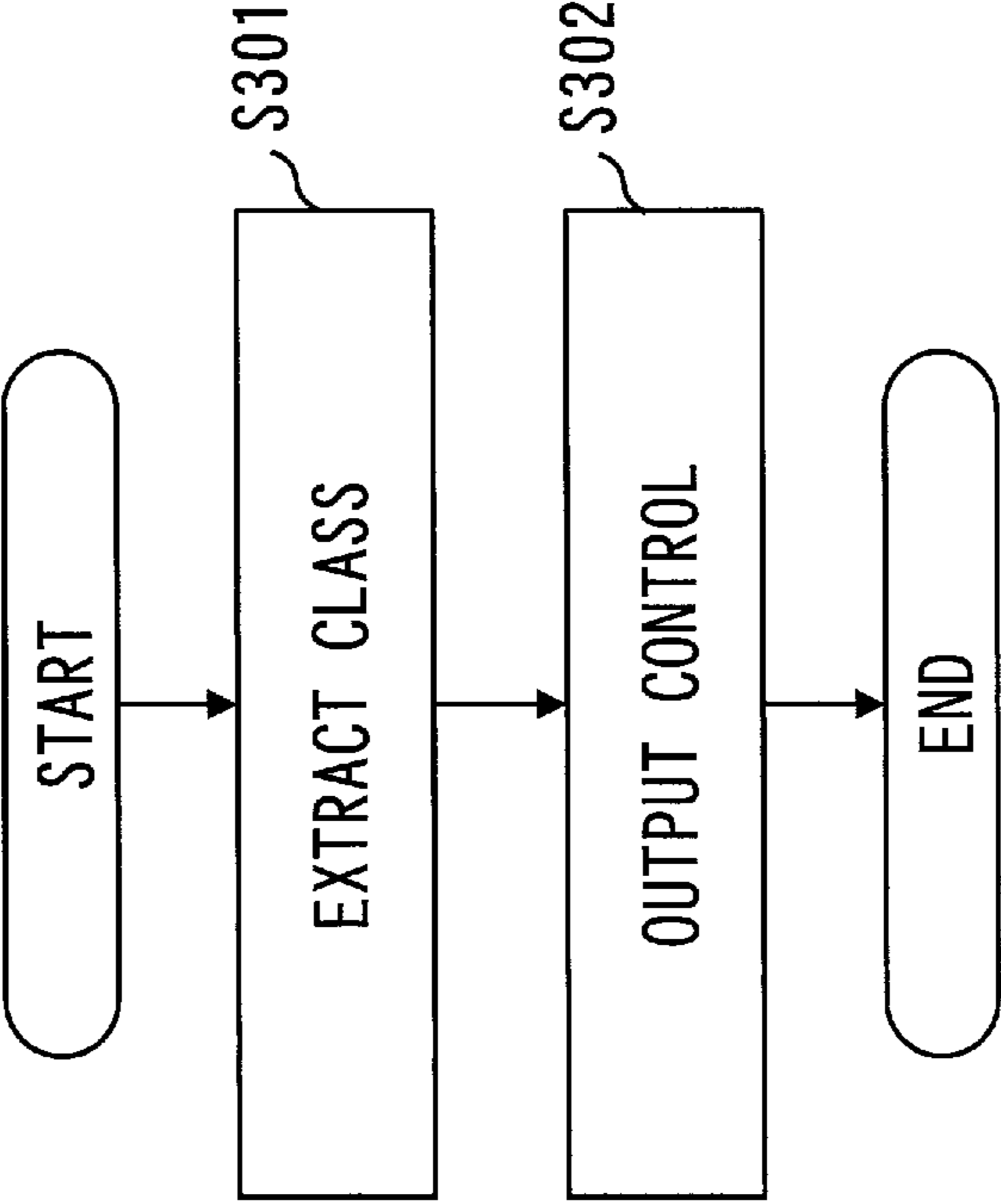


Fig. 17

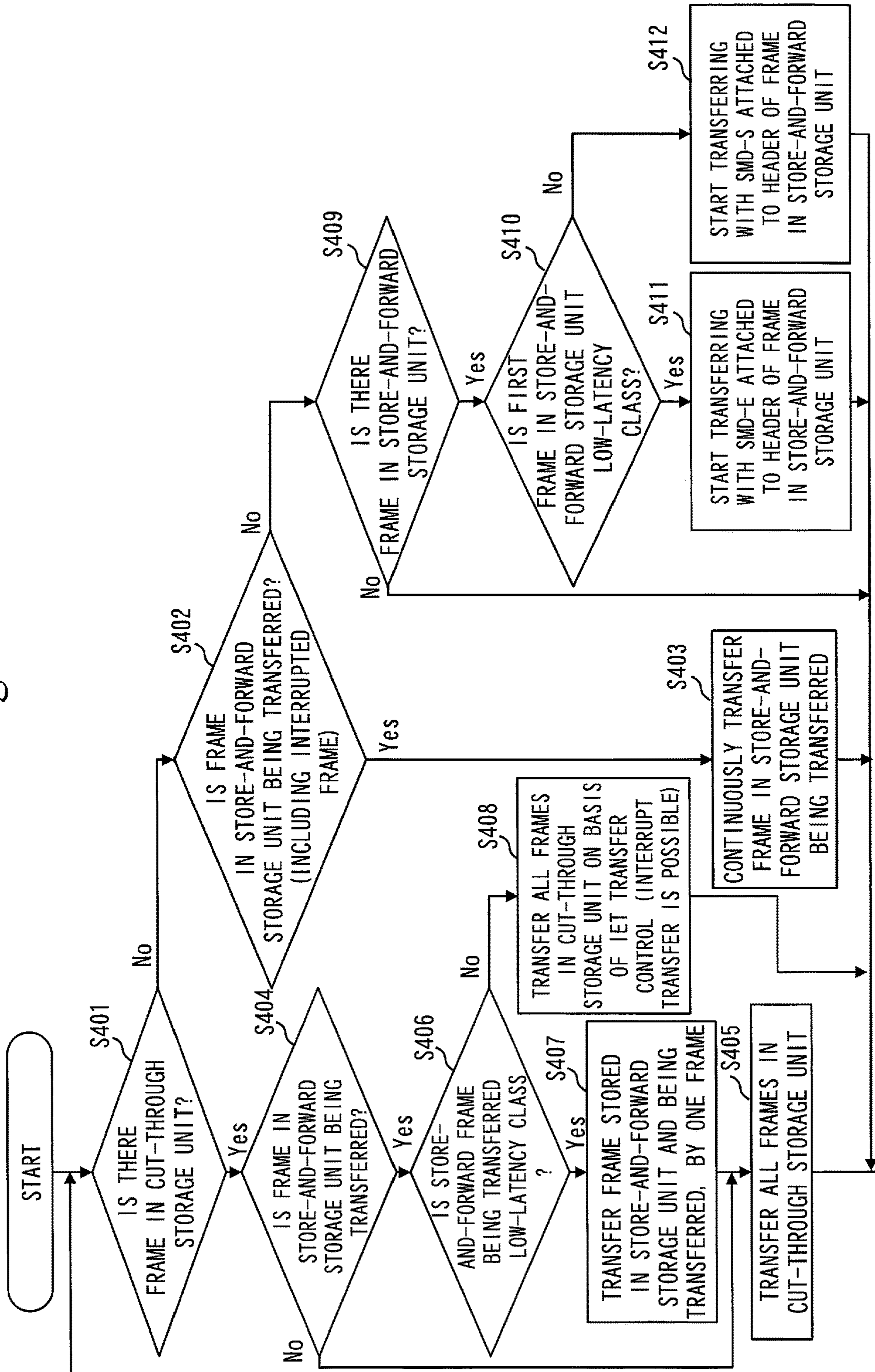


Fig. 18

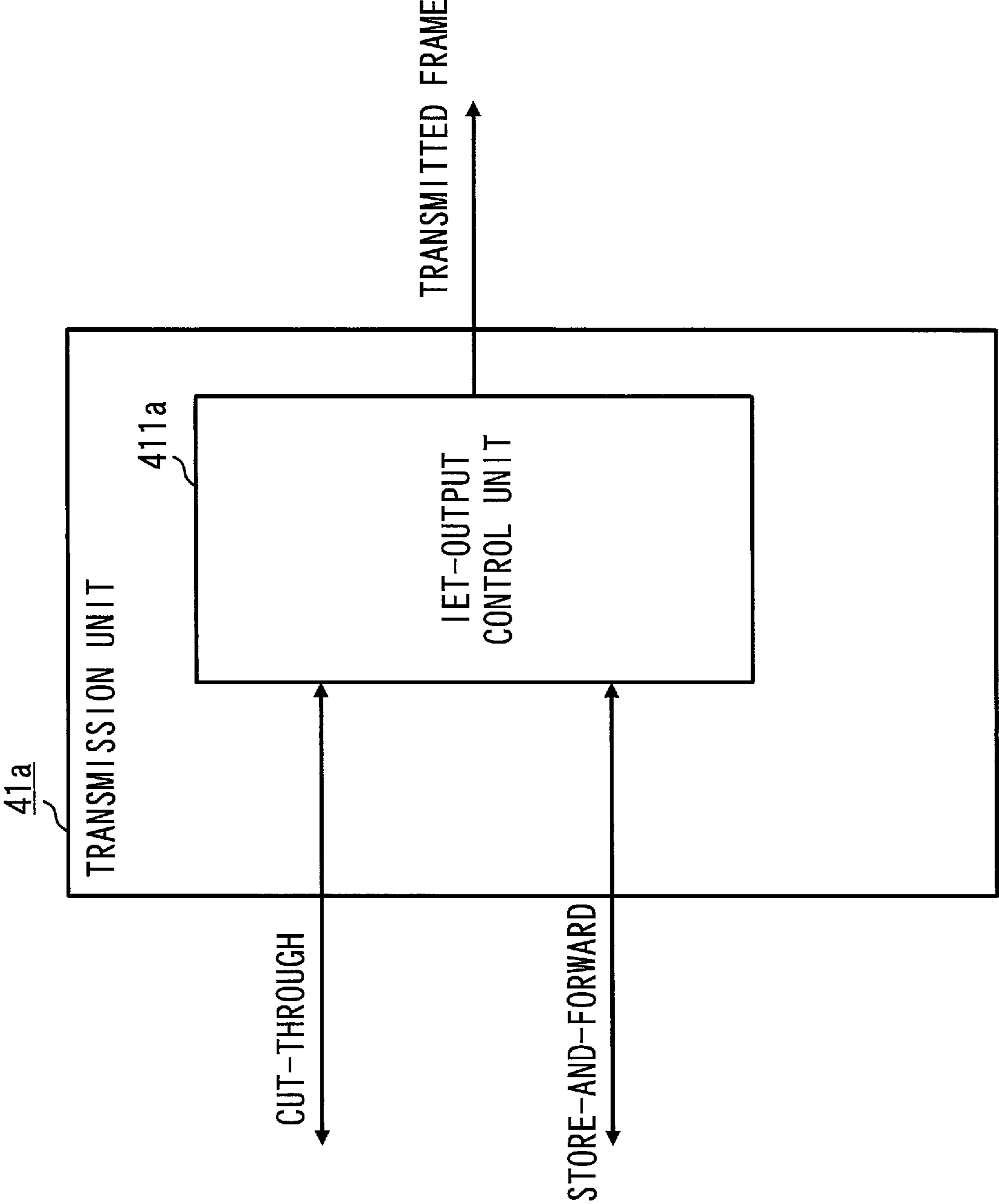


Fig. 19

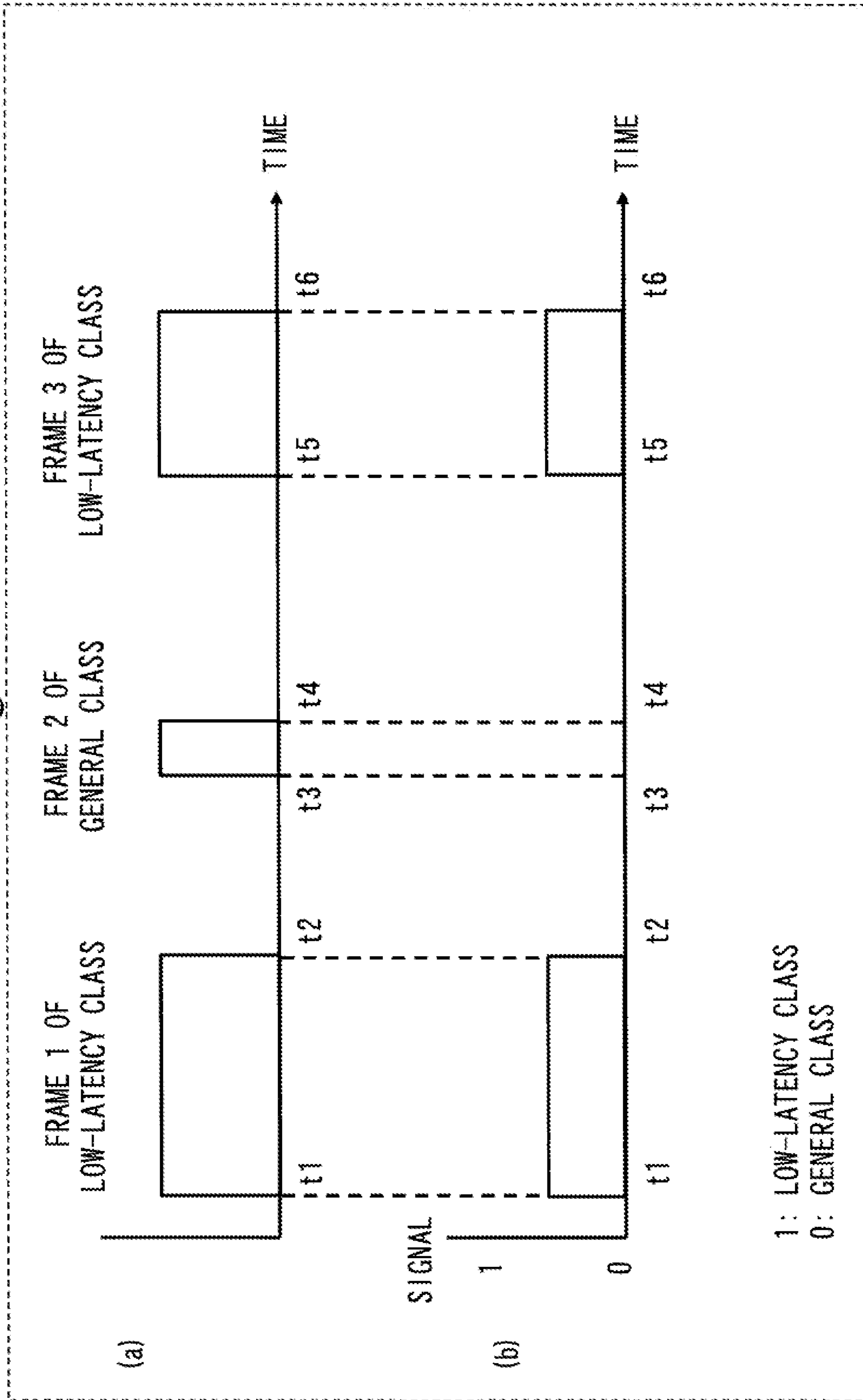


Fig. 20

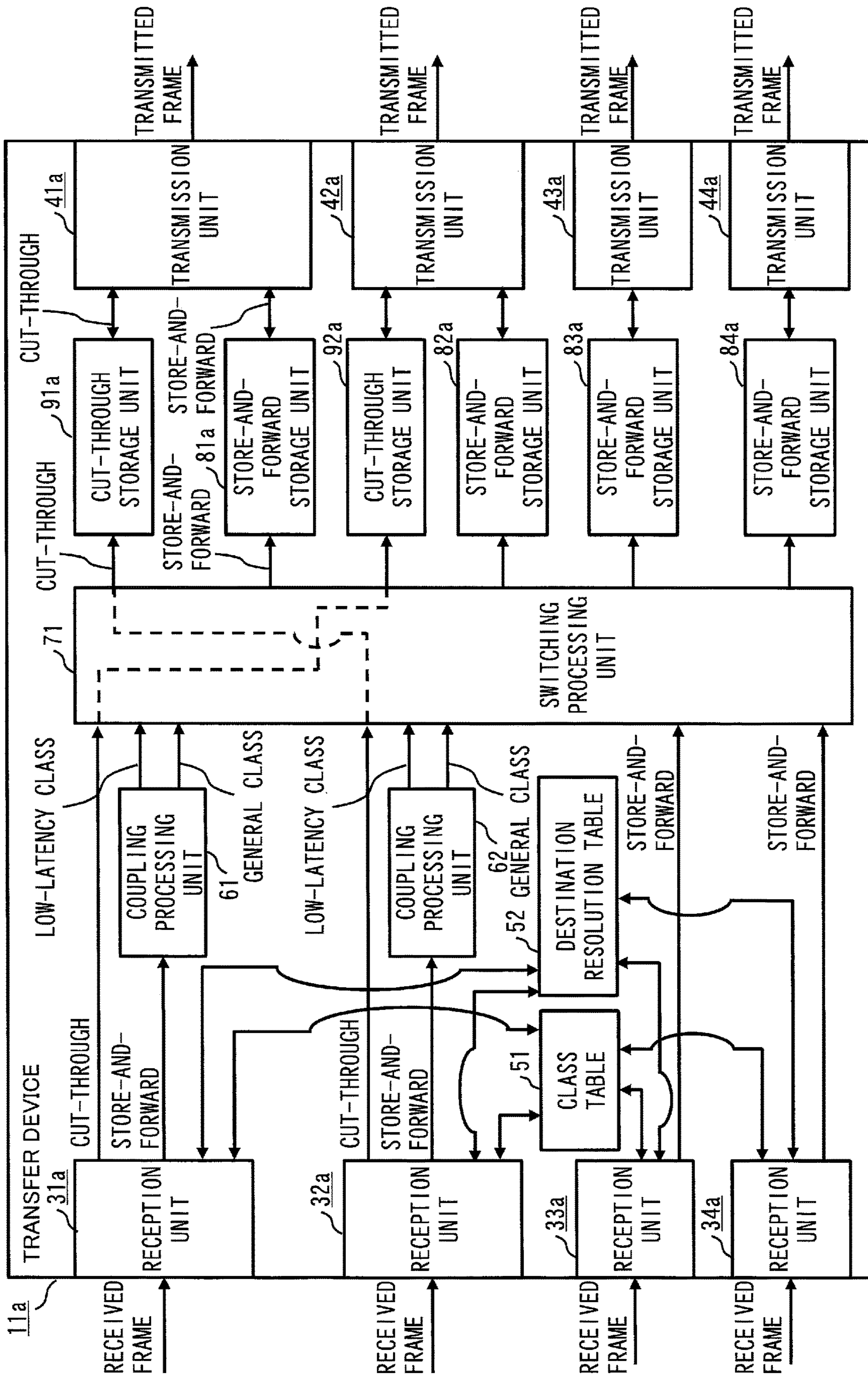


Fig. 21

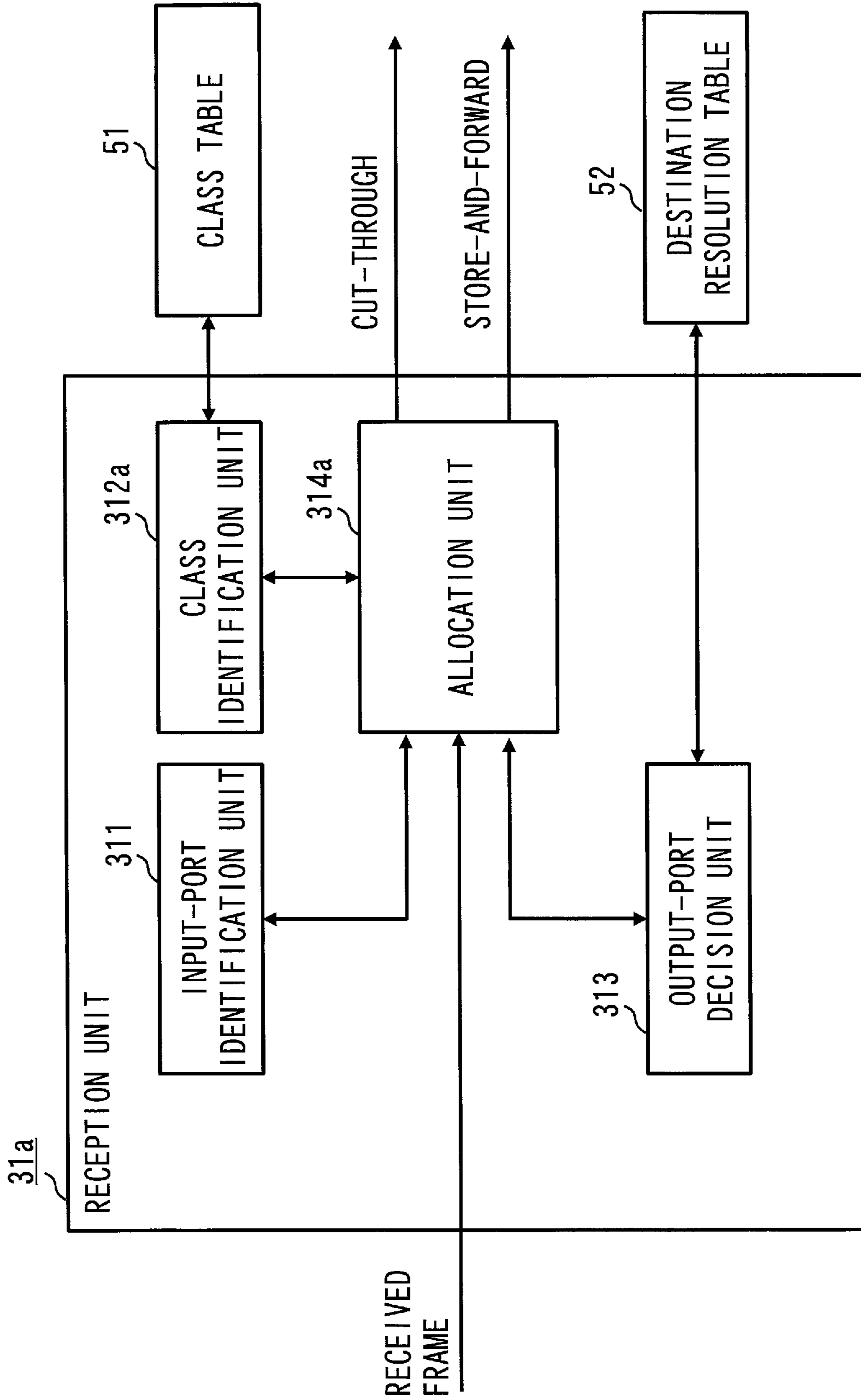


Fig. 22

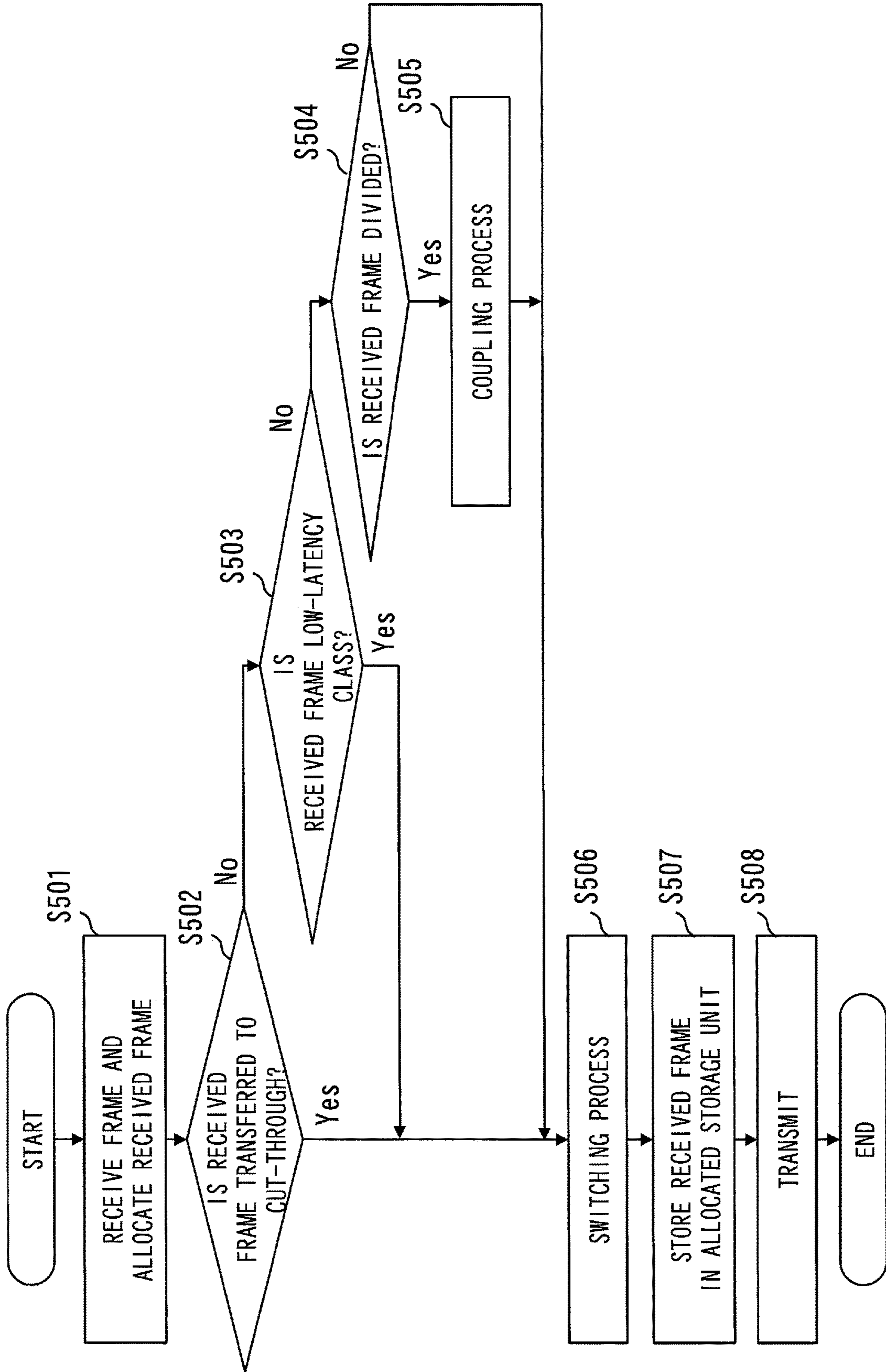
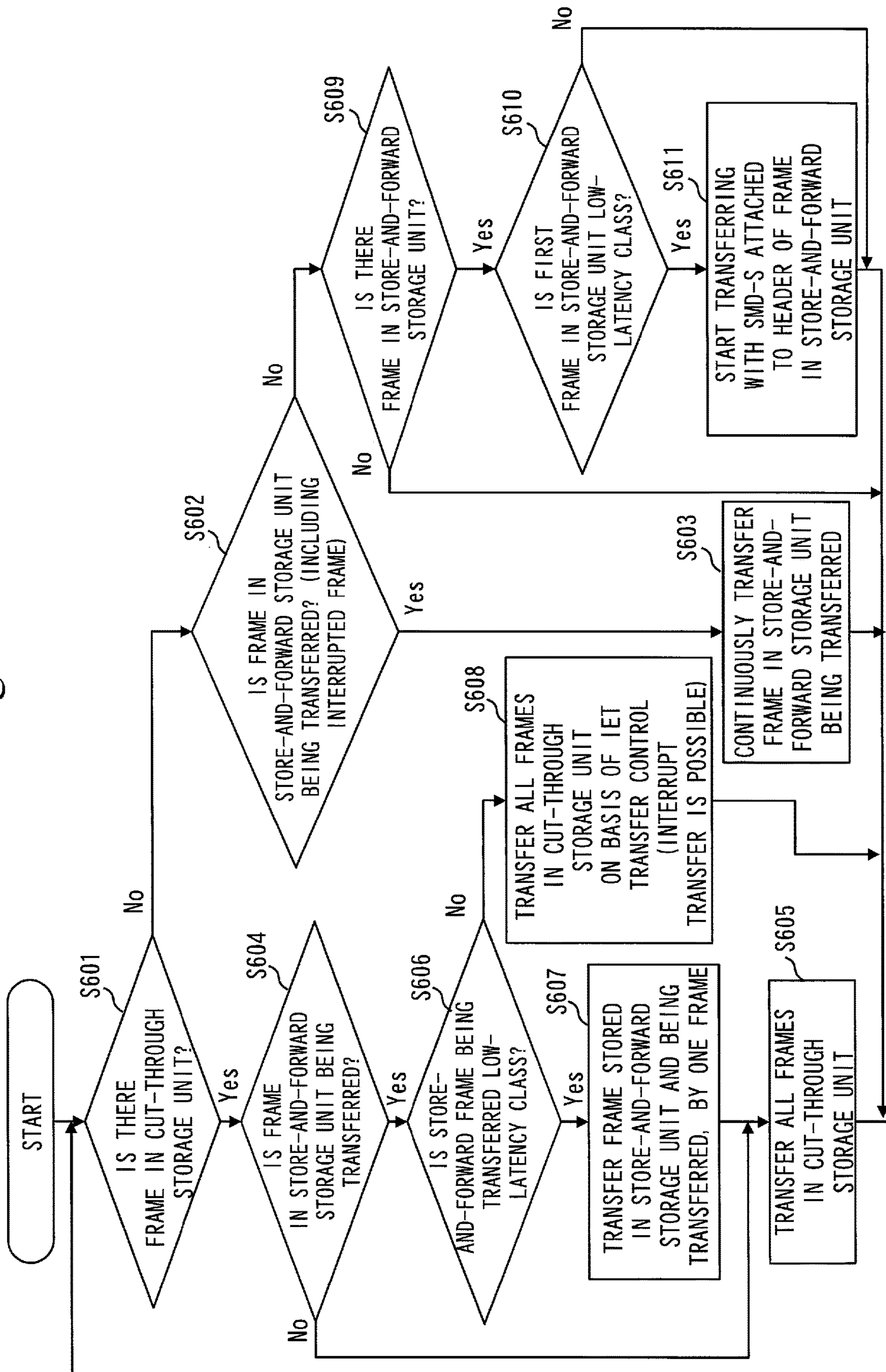


Fig. 23



1**TRANSFER DEVICE, TRANSFER METHOD,
AND TRANSFER SYSTEM**

TECHNICAL FIELD

The present invention relates to a transfer device, a transfer method, and a transfer system including a plurality of ports and transferring a received frame.

BACKGROUND ART

Frames to be transferred in an industrial Ethernet (registered trademark) network include frames that require low-latency transfer and frames that allow for transfer latency. For example, strict latency requirements are sometimes imposed on control-related frames that handle control data for devices to realize a high speed and a high reliability. Latency is often more permissible to information-related frames other than the control-related frames, which handle data such as video data, audio data, or user data as compared to the control-related frames while latency requirements differ according to traffic types. In the following descriptions, frames that require low-latency transfer such as the control-related frames are described as frames of a low-latency class. Meanwhile, frames that have relatively less-strict latency requirements and allow for latency transfer as compared to frames of the low-latency class are described as frames of a general class. The frames of the low-latency class need to be transferred in priority to the frames of the general class.

A cut-through method is conventionally used as a method for transferring frames with low latency. The cut-through method transfers data of one frame without temporarily storing the data and therefore can transfer the data with lower latency relative to a store-and-forward method being a transfer method of a general multiplexer. In a case where frames of the low-latency class are to be transferred in priority to frames of the general class, for example, a transfer device of Non Patent Literature 1 includes MAC (Media Access Control) to which an IET (Interspersing Express Traffic) technique that enables to reduce a transfer latency time of frames of the low-latency class by performing interrupt transfer defined as a standard by IEEE 802.3 br is applied. The transfer device of Non Patent Literature 1 includes cut-through storage units as many as input ports for each output port, where the cut-through storage units perform transfer by the cut-through method of suppressing latency to transfer frames of the low-latency class with low latency. When there is a request for transfer of frames of the low-latency class during transfer of frames of the general class, the IET technique interrupts the transfer of the frames of the general class in a range that meets the minimum frame length of the Ethernet (registered trademark) to perform interrupt transfer of the frames of the low-latency class, and transfers the remaining part of the frames of the general class after the transfer of the frames of the low-latency class ends. The transfer device including the MAC to which the IET is applied can reduce the transfer latency time of frames of the low-latency class in this way. The IET technique is a technique particularly effective in a case where frames of the low-latency class are transferred via a plurality of transfer devices.

CITATION LIST

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SUMMARY OF INVENTION

Technical Problem

However, considering a case where frames of the low-latency class are input from a plurality of input ports at the time of transfer by the cut-through method, the cut-through storage units as many as the input ports for each output port are required in the conventional transfer device described above. Since frames are read from the cut-through storage units as many as the input ports and are transmitted, there is a problem that output control on the frames is complicated.

The present invention has been achieved to solve the problem described above and an object of the present invention is to provide a transfer device, a transfer method, and a transfer system that realize an IET low-latency transfer function by control simpler than that in the conventional transfer devices.

Solution to Problem

A transfer device according to the present invention includes:

an output-port decision unit to decide, on a basis of storage information stored in a frame input, an output port from which the frame is output from among a plurality of ports;

an allocation unit to associate an input port to which the frame is input with an output port from which a frame which is transferred by a cut-through method is output on a one-to-one basis, and allocate a first frame to a first pathway transferring by the cut-through method and allocate a second frame to a second pathway transferring by a store-and-forward method on a basis of type information of an input port to which a frame has been input, class information of the frame, and the output port decided by the output-port decision unit; and

an IET-output control unit to output the first frame allocated to the first pathway from the output port, decide whether to divide the second frame on a basis of the class information of the second frame allocated to the second pathway, and output the second frame from the output port on a basis of decision.

Advantageous Effects of Invention

According to the present invention, it is possible to realize an IET low-latency transfer function by control simpler than that in the conventional transfer devices.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF DRAWINGS

FIG. 1 is a functional block diagram of a transfer system including a transfer device according to a first embodiment of the present invention.

FIG. 2 is a functional block diagram of the transfer device according to the first embodiment of the present invention.

FIG. 3 is a diagram illustrating an example of an IET frame.

FIG. 4 is a diagram illustrating an example of a frame of middle and trailing fragments at a time when a frame is divided.

FIG. 5 is a functional block diagram of a reception unit of the transfer device according to the first embodiment of the present invention.

FIG. 6 is a functional block diagram of another reception unit of the transfer device according to the first embodiment of the present invention.

FIG. 7 is a functional block diagram of a transmission unit of the transfer device according to the first embodiment of the present invention.

FIG. 8 is a functional block diagram of another transmission unit of the transfer device according to the first embodiment of the present invention.

FIG. 9 is a hardware configuration diagram of the transfer device according to the first embodiment of the present invention.

FIG. 10 is another hardware configuration diagram of the transfer device according to the first embodiment of the present invention.

FIG. 11 is a flowchart illustrating an operation of the transfer device according to the first embodiment of the present invention.

FIG. 12 is a flowchart illustrating an operation of the reception unit of the transfer device according to the first embodiment of the present invention.

FIG. 13 is a diagram illustrating a class identification method based on an SMD value.

FIG. 14 is a diagram illustrating an example of a class table.

FIG. 15 is an example illustrating input ports for output ports that perform transfer by cut-through according to the first embodiment.

FIG. 16 is a flowchart illustrating an operation of the transmission unit of the transfer device according to the first embodiment of the present invention.

FIG. 17 is a flowchart illustrating an operation of an IET-output control unit of the transmission unit of the transfer device according to the first embodiment of the present invention.

FIG. 18 is a functional block diagram of a transmission unit of a transfer device according to a second embodiment of the present invention.

FIG. 19 are diagrams illustrating an example in which class information of identified frames is transmitted to an allocation unit as a pulse signal, where (a) is a diagram illustrating a relation between frames to be transmitted and a time and (b) is a diagram illustrating a relation between signal values of class information of frames and a time.

FIG. 20 is a functional block diagram of a transfer device according to a third embodiment of the present invention.

FIG. 21 is a functional block diagram of a reception unit of the transfer device according to the third embodiment.

FIG. 22 is a flowchart illustrating an operation of the transfer device according to the third embodiment of the present invention.

FIG. 23 is a flowchart illustrating an operation of an IET-output control unit of a transmission unit of the transfer device according to the third embodiment of the present invention.

DESCRIPTION OF EMBODIMENTS

First Embodiment

FIG. 1 is a functional block diagram of a transfer system 1 including a transfer device 11a according to a first embodiment of the present invention.

The transfer system 1 includes the transfer device 11a, terminal devices 21 to 23 connected to the transfer device 11a, a transfer device 12a connected to the transfer device 11a, and terminal devices 24 to 26 connected to the transfer device 12a. These devices are connected with lines.

The transfer device 11a transfers, for example, frames received from the terminal device 21 to the terminal device 22. The transfer device 11a also transfers, for example, frames received from the terminal device 21 to the transfer device 12a. The transfer device 12a is a device identical to the transfer device 11a. In the transfer device 11a of the first embodiment, the terminal device 21 is connected to a port 101, the transfer device 12a is connected to a port 102, the terminal device 22 is connected to a port 103, and the terminal device 23 is connected to a port 104. Frames can be input to or output from the ports 101 to 104.

The transfer device 11a includes MAC to which the IET technique is applied, to transfer frames of a low-latency class with low latency. The terminal devices 21 and 22 and the transfer device 12a each include MAC to which the IET technique is applied, similarly to the transfer device 11a. It is assumed that the terminal devices 23 to 26 do not include MAC to which the IET technique is applied, or do not use the IET technique while including MAC.

In the following descriptions, the cut-through method is described simply as cut-through. The store-and-forward method is described simply as store-and-forward.

The terminal device 21 in FIG. 1 transmits or receives frames to or from the transfer device 11a. The terminal device 21 is a control device, a communication device, or the like. The terminal devices 22 and 23 are identical devices to the terminal device 21.

The terminal device 24 transmits or receives frames to or from the transfer device 12a. The terminal device 24 is a control device, a communication device, or the like. The terminal device 24 has functions identical to those of the terminal device 21 while frames are transmitted to or received from a different transfer device. The terminal devices 25 and 26 are identical devices to the terminal device 24.

In the first embodiment, the terminal devices 21 to 26 handle also control-related frames and information-related frames. In the transfer device 11a, the ports 101 and 102 are ports that support the IET and are capable of transfer by cut-through. Ports that enable transfer by the IET are referred to also as relay ports. Ports other than the relay ports, which enable only transfer by store-and-forward, are also referred to as terminal ports. That is, in the transfer device 11a, the ports 101 and 102 are relay ports and the ports 103 and 104 are terminal ports.

FIG. 2 is a functional block diagram of the transfer device 11a according to the first embodiment of the present invention.

The transfer device 11a includes reception units 31a to 34a, a class table 51, a destination resolution table 52, coupling processing units 61 and 62, a switching processing unit 71, store-and-forward storage units 81a to 84a, cut-through storage units 91a and 92a, and transmission units 41a to 44a. The transfer device 12a has a configuration identical to that of the transfer device 11a.

The reception unit 31a is an input port of the port 101. The reception unit 31a receives a frame from another device, identifies the priority class, searches for output ports, and decides a pathway through which the received frame is to be transferred for each of the output ports on the basis of the input port, the priority class, and the output port information. The reception unit 31a transmits a frame to be transmitted by

cut-through to a cut-through path and transmits a frame to be transmitted by store-and-forward to a store-and-forward path. In FIG. 2, a cut-through path is described as a cut-through, and a store-and-forward path is described as a store-and-forward. The reception unit **31a** includes MAC to which the IET technique is applied. The reception unit **32a** is identical to the reception unit **31a**. However, the reception unit **32a** is an input port of the port **102**.

The reception unit **33a** is an input port of the port **103**. The reception unit **33a** receives a frame from another device and decides a port to which the received frame is to be transferred. The reception unit **33a** transmits the received frame to a store-and-forward path on the basis of the decided pathway. The reception unit **33a** does not need to include MAC to which the IET technique is applied. The reception unit **34a** is identical to the reception unit **33a**. However, the reception unit **34a** is an input port of the port **104**. Details of the reception units **31a** to **34a** are described later. The reception unit is provided for each port.

The class table **51** is a table that associates storage information in received frames and class information of the frames with each other. The class information includes at least two classes which are a low-latency class and a general class and each of the classes can be further divided into a plurality of classes. The class table **51** is referred to by the reception units **33a** and **34a**. The class table **51** has been stored in the transfer device **11a** in advance.

The destination resolution table **52** is a table that associates the storage information in received frames and output port information of the frames. The destination resolution table **52** is referred to by the reception units **31a** to **34a**. The destination resolution table **52** can be stored in the transfer device **11a** in advance or can be learned by the transfer device **11a** on the basis of the input ports and the storage information in the frames, and has functions identical to those of a general layer-2 switch FDB (Forwarding Database) table.

While one class table **51** and one destination resolution table **52** are provided for the transfer device **11a**, each of the reception units can include the class table and the destination resolution table.

The coupling processing unit **61** identifies the classes of received frames and transfers the frames to the switching processing unit **71** through a store-and-forward path of the low-latency class and a store-and-forward path of the general class which is on a different line. The coupling processing unit **61** includes also a storage unit that temporarily stores received frames of the general class. The coupling processing unit **61** has a function to determine whether a frame of the general class has been divided and performs coupling of a received frame when determining that the received frame of the general class has been divided. When a received frame has not been divided, a coupling process is not performed. The coupling processing unit **61** may transfer a received frame of the general class and a received frame of the low-latency class through the store-and-forward path by multiplexing the received frame of the general class with the received frame of the low-latency class. When performing multiplexing, the coupling processing unit **61** includes also a storage unit that stores a frame of the low-latency class.

The coupling processing unit **62** has functions identical to those of the coupling processing unit **61**.

The switching processing unit **71** performs a layer-2 switching process. Specifically, the switching processing unit **71** allocates a received frame to cut-through storage units or store-and-forward storage units connecting to trans-

mission units being transmission destinations of the received frames on the basis of the output port information and the pathways decided by the reception units **31a** to **34a**. The switching processing unit **71** multiplexes frames received through the store-and-forward pathways and thereafter allocates the frames to the store-and-forward storage units being the transmission destinations.

The cut-through storage unit **91a** stores therein received frames. When a frame is input thereto, the cut-through storage unit **91a** outputs a transmission request to the transmission unit **41a** connected thereto. The cut-through storage unit **91a** transmits the frame to the transmission unit **41a** when a transmission permission is issued from the transmission unit **41a**.

The cut-through storage unit **92a** is identical to the cut-through storage unit **91a**. However, the cut-through storage unit **92a** becomes the transmission unit **42a** instead of the transmission unit **41a**.

The store-and-forward storage unit **81a** stores therein received frames. The store-and-forward storage unit **81a** manages stored frames in units of priority classes in the order of inputting. When one or more frames are stored therein, the store-and-forward storage unit **81a** outputs a transmission request to the transmission unit **41a** connected thereto. When a transmission permission is issued from the transmission unit **41a**, the store-and-forward storage unit **81a** preferentially transmits frames of a higher priority class among the stored frames to the transmission unit **41a**. It is assumed that the low-latency class has a priority higher than the general class. At the time of transmission of a frame, the transmission unit **41a** is notified also of the class information of the frame and frame information such as the frame length. When the class information and the frame length of a frame are stored in the frame, the store-and-forward storage unit **81a** starts or stops the transmission on the basis of whether there is a transmission permission from the transmission unit **41a**.

The store-and-forward storage unit **82a** becomes the transmission unit **42a** instead of the transmission unit **41a**. The store-and-forward storage unit **83a** becomes the transmission unit **43a** instead of the transmission unit **41a**. The store-and-forward storage unit **84a** becomes the transmission unit **44a** instead of the transmission unit **41a**. One store-and-forward storage unit is provided for each of the transmission units.

The cut-through storage units **91a** and **92a** store therein frames of the low-latency class. The store-and-forward storage units **81a** to **84a** can store therein both frames of the low-latency class and frames of the general class.

The transmission unit **41a** is an output port of the port **101**. The transmission unit **41a** transmits received frames by cut-through or by store-and-forward. The transmission unit **41a** includes MAC to which the IET technique is applied. The transmission unit **42a** is identical to the transmission unit **41a**. However, the transmission unit **42a** is an output port of the port **102**.

The transmission unit **43a** is an output port of the port **103**. The transmission unit **43a** transmits received frames by store-and-forward. The transmission unit **43a** does not need to include MAC to which the IET technique is applied. The transmission unit **44a** is identical to the transmission unit **43a**. However, the transmission unit **44a** is an output port of the port **104**. Details of the transmission units **41a** to **44a** are described later. The transmission unit is provided for each port.

A frame configuration is explained below.

FIG. 3 is a diagram illustrating an example of an IET frame.

An undivided IET frame and a divided leading fragment in FIG. 3 are constituted by “preamble”, “SMD (Start Mframe Delimiter) value” “data”, and “CRC (Cyclic Redundancy Check)”. The “data” is a general Ethernet (registered trademark) frame and various data including “destination MAC address” and “transmission source MAC address” is written therein. The “CRC” is stored in the end of the Ethernet (registered trademark) frame and the value of an FCS (Frame Check Sequence) being a value for detecting an error in contents of the frame data is stored therein. Numbers in parentheses indicate the numbers of bytes. Since this is a frame of the low-latency class, “SMD-E” is set as the “SMD value”. “SMD-S” is set as the “SMD value” for an undivided frame of the general class. The leading fragment of divided frames is constituted by a frame identical to that illustrated in FIG. 3. “SMD-S” is set as the “SMD value” and an “MCRC (Mframe CRC) value” for detecting an error in the contents of data in the leading fragment and indicating division is stored in the “CRC”.

FIG. 4 is a diagram illustrating an example of a frame of middle and trailing fragments at a time when a frame is divided.

The middle and trailing fragments in FIG. 4 are constituted by “preamble”, “SMD value”, “Frag Count”, “data”, and “CRC”. “SMD-C” is set as the “SMD value” in FIG. 4. The “Frag Count” is a value provided in a sequential order each time a fragment is transferred, and is a value for checking whether no fragment is missing. “MCRC” for detecting an error in the contents of data in the middle fragment and indicating division, which is identical to that in the leading fragment, is stored in the “CRC” of the middle fragment, and an “FCS” value of data corresponding to one frame being data of all divided fragments from the leading fragment is stored in the “CRC” of the trailing fragment.

FIG. 5 is a functional block diagram of the reception unit 31a of the transfer device 11a according to the first embodiment of the present invention. The reception unit 31a is explained in detail with reference to FIG. 5.

The reception unit 31a includes an input-port identification unit 311, a class identification unit 312a, an output-port decision unit 313, and an allocation unit 314a.

The input-port identification unit 311 identifies type information of a port to which a frame has been input. The type information of a port is information different according to ports, such as an input port number.

The class identification unit 312a identifies the low-latency class and the general class on the basis of the SMD value stored in the header of an IET frame received from the terminal device 21 by the allocation unit 314a.

The output-port decision unit 313 refers to the destination resolution table 52 based on the storage information in a frame received from the terminal device 21 by the allocation unit 314a to decide an output port of the received frame. A plurality of output ports may be decided.

The allocation unit 314a receives a frame of the low-latency class or a frame of the general class from the terminal device 21. The allocation unit 314a allocates a frame of the low-latency class to be transferred to the transmission unit 42a to the cut-through path and allocates a frame of the low-latency class to be transferred to ports other than the transmission unit 42a and all frames of the general class to the store-and-forward path on the basis of the type information of the input port, the class information of the frame, and the output port information. Since there

may be a plurality of ports to which a frame is to be transferred and whether to transfer a received frame via the cut-through pathway or the store-and-forward pathway is decided with respect to each transfer destination port, a frame of the low-latency class may be transferred to the both pathways.

When transferring a frame, the allocation unit 314a stores the class information and the output port information in the item of the “header” or the “data” of the frame.

The functional block diagram of the reception unit 32a is identical to that of the reception unit 31a. However, the allocation unit 314a receives a frame of the low-latency class or a frame of the general class from the transfer device 12a and transfers a frame of the low-latency class that is to be output to the transmission unit 41a to the cut-through path.

FIG. 6 is a functional block diagram of the reception unit 33a of the transfer device 11a according to the first embodiment of the present invention. The reception unit 33a is explained in detail with reference to FIG. 6.

The reception unit 33a has a configuration identical to that of the reception unit 31a. However, the reception unit 33a does not need to have the MAC function of the IET. An allocation unit 314b receives a frame of the low-latency class or a frame of the general class from the terminal device 22. A class identification unit 312b refers to the class table 51 based on the storage information in a frame received by the allocation unit 314b and identifies if the received frame is a frame of the low-latency class or a frame of the general class. The class identification unit 312b may have the class table 51 for each reception port and identify the low-latency class or the general class on the basis of the storage information in a frame received by the allocation unit 314b. Further, similarly to the allocation unit 314a, the allocation unit 314b transfers a frame via the store-and-forward path no matter whether the class information of the frame is the low-latency class or the general class.

The functional block diagram of the reception unit 34a is identical to that of the reception unit 33a. However, the allocation unit 314b receives a frame of the low-latency class or a frame of the general class from the terminal device 23.

FIG. 7 is a functional block diagram of the transmission unit 41a of the transfer device 11a according to the first embodiment of the present invention. The transmission unit 41a is explained in detail with reference to FIG. 7.

The transmission unit 41a includes an IET-output control unit 411a and a class extraction unit 412.

The class extraction unit 412 extracts the class information provided to a frame by the allocation unit 314b from the frame received through the store-and-forward path.

When there is a transmission request for a frame through the cut-through path during transmission of a frame through the store-and-forward path, the IET-output control unit 411a determines whether the frame being transferred by store-and-forward can be divided on the basis of the class information extracted by the class extraction unit 412. When the class information is the low-latency class, the IET-output control unit 411a outputs the frame being transferred to the end without dividing the frame and thereafter outputs the frame of the cut-through path. When the frame on the store-and-forward side is a frame of the general class, interrupt transfer of the frame from the cut-through path can be performed depending on the transfer state of the frame, in a similar manner to the normal IET output control. When outputting a frame of the low-latency class of the store-and-

forward path without dividing the frame, the IET-output control unit **411a** provides the SMD-E value to the header of the frame.

The functional block diagram of the transmission unit **42a** is identical to that of the transmission unit **41a**.

FIG. **8** is a functional block diagram of the transmission unit **43a** of the transfer device **11a** according to the first, embodiment of the present invention. The transmission unit **43a** is explained in detail with reference to FIG. **8**.

The transmission unit **43a** includes an output control unit **411b** that sequentially transmits frames to be transferred by store-and-forward. The transmission unit **43a** may include the class extraction unit **412** while it is not essential.

The output control unit **411b** outputs by store-and-forward since the pathway decided by the reception unit that has received the frames is only a pathway to transfer by store-and-forward. Frames to be transferred by cut-through are not input to the output control unit **411b** and therefore there is no need to perform interrupt transfer according to the IET.

The functional block diagram of the transmission unit **44a** is identical to that of the transmission unit **43a**.

A hardware configuration of the transfer device **11a** according to the first embodiment is explained next.

FIG. **9** is a hardware configuration diagram of the transfer device **11a** according to the first embodiment of the present invention. A configuration of the transfer device **11a** according to the first embodiment of the present invention is explained with reference to FIG. **9**.

The transfer device **11a** includes a bus **111** and a processing circuit **116**.

The bus **111** is a signal path that electrically connects devices to each other and transmits or receives frames.

The processing circuit **116** is for example, a single circuit, a composite circuit, a programmed processor, an ASIC (Application Specific Integrated Circuit), an FPGA (Field-Programmable Gate Array), or a combination of these. The processing circuit **116** realizes respective functions of the reception units **31a** to **34a**, the class table **51**, the destination resolution table **52**, the coupling processing units **61** and **62**, the switching processing unit **71**, the cut-through storage units **91a** and **92a**, the store-and-forward storage units **81a** to **84a**, and the transmission units **41a** to **44a** collectively. The processing circuit **116** may realize the respective functions of the reception units **31a** to **34a**, the class table **51**, the destination resolution table **52**, the coupling processing units **61** and **62**, the switching processing unit **71**, the cut-through storage units **91a** and **92a**, the store-and-forward storage units **81a** to **84a**, and the transmission units **41a** to **44a** with separate processing circuits.

FIG. **10** is another hardware configuration diagram of the transfer device **11a** according to the first embodiment of the present invention. Another configuration of the transfer device **11a** is explained with reference to FIG. **10**.

The functions of the transfer device **11a** are realized by software, firmware, or a combination of software and firmware. The software, the firmware, or the combination of software and firmware is described as a program.

The transfer device **11a** includes hardware such as the bus **111**, an input/output interface **112**, a memory **113**, a storage medium **114**, and a CPU (Central Processing Unit) **115**. In the following descriptions, the input/output interface **112** is described as the input/output IF **112**.

The bus **111** is a signal path that electrically connects devices to each other and transmits or receives frames similarly in FIG. **9**.

The input/output IF **112** transmits or receives frames. The reception units **31a** to **34a** and the transmission units **41a** to **44a** are realized by the input/output IF **112**.

The memory **113** functions as a work area into which programs stored in the storage medium **114** are loaded. The memory **113** is, for example, a RAM (Random Access Memory).

The storage medium **114** stores therein programs to realize functions, such as a program for deciding a transfer pathway or a program for executing output control. The storage medium **114** stores therein frame data, the type information of the input ports, the output port information, the class information, and the like. The storage medium **114** is, for example, a non-volatile or volatile semiconductor memory such as a ROM (Read Only Memory), a flash memory, an EPROM (Erasable Programmable Read Only Memory), an EEPROM (Electrically Erasable Programmable Read Only Memory), or an HDD (Hard Disk Drive). The storage medium **114** also stores therein an OS (Operating System). The reception units **31a** to **34a**, the class table **51**, the destination resolution table **52**, the coupling processing units **61** and **62**, the store-and-forward storage units **81a** to **84a**, and the cut-through storage units **91a** and **92a** are realized by the storage medium **114**.

The CPU **115** is connected to other devices via the bus **111** and controls these devices. The CPU **115** reads programs in the storage medium **114**, which have been loaded into the memory **113**, and executes the programs. The CPU **115** loads at least a part of the OS stored in the storage medium **114** into the memory **113** and executes the program while executing the OS. The CPU **115** is an IC (Integrated Circuit) that performs processing. The CPU may be a central processing device, an arithmetic device, a microprocessor, a microcomputer, a processor, or a DSP (Digital Signal Processor). The reception units **31a** to **34a**, the coupling processing units **61** and **62**, the switching processing unit **71**, and the transmission units **41a** to **44a** are realized by reading programs of the storage medium **114**, having been loaded into the memory **113**, and executing the programs by the CPU **115**.

Information of the devices, frames, signal values, and the like are stored in the memory **113**, the storage medium **114**, or a register or a cache memory in the CPU **115**.

The memory **113** and the storage medium **114** may be a same device without being separately provided.

Further, the programs may be stored in a portable recording medium such as a magnetic disk, a flexible disk, an optical disk, a compact disk, and a DVD (Digital Versatile Disk).

Furthermore, it is also possible to realize a part of the functions of the reception units **31a** to **34a**, the class table **51**, the destination resolution table **52**, the coupling processing units **61** and **62**, the switching processing unit **71**, the store-and-forward storage units **81a** to **84a**, the cut-through storage units **91a** and **92a**, and the transmission units **41a** to **44a** of the transfer device **11a** with dedicated hardware and realize another part with software or firmware. For example, it is possible to realize the functions of the reception units **31a** to **34a**, the class table **51**, the destination resolution table **52**, the coupling processing units **61** and **62**, the switching processing unit **71**, the cut-through storage units **91a** and **92a**, and the store-and-forward storage units **81a** to **84a** with a processing circuit being dedicated hardware and realize the functions of the transmission units **41a** to **44a** with the CPU **115** being a processing circuit that reads the program stored in the storage medium **114** and executes the program. The

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processing circuit can realize the functions of the transfer device **11a** with hardware, software, firmware, or a combination thereof.

An operation of the transfer device **11a** is explained next.

FIG. **11** is a flowchart illustrating an operation of the transfer device **11a** according to the first embodiment of the present invention. FIG. **11** illustrates an operation of the transfer device **11a** in a case where there is one output port. An operation of the transfer device **11a** is explained below with reference to FIG. **11**.

In Step **S101**, the reception unit **31a** receives a frame of the low-latency class or a frame of the general class from the terminal device **21**, and decides a pathway through which the received frame is to be transferred. The reception unit **31a** allocates the received frame to the cut-through path when the frame is to be transferred by cut-through, and allocates the received frame to the store-and-forward path when the frame is to be transferred by store-and-forward on the basis of the decided pathway. There is a case where the reception unit **31a** transfers the received frame to a plurality of ports. In this case, the reception unit **31a** may output the frame to both the cut-through path and the store-and-forward path. The reception units **32a** to **34a** are identical to the reception unit **31a**. However, the reception units **33a** and **34a** output frames only to the store-and-forward path.

In Step **S102**, when the reception unit **31a** allocates the received frame to the cut-through path, Step **S102: Yes** is obtained and the process proceeds to Step **S106**. When the reception unit **31a** allocates the received frame to the store-and-forward path, Step **S102: No** is obtained and the process proceeds to Step **S103**. The reception unit **32a** is identical to the reception unit **31a**.

In Step **S102**, the reception units **33a** and **34a** allocate a frame to the store-and-forward path no matter whether the class information of the frame is the low-latency class or the general class. Therefore, Step **S102: No** is obtained and the process proceeds to Step **S103**.

In Step **S103**, the coupling processing unit **61** receives the frame through the store-and-forward path from the reception unit **31a**. The coupling processing unit **61** determines whether the received frame is divided.

In Step **S103**, the coupling processing unit **61** transfers the received frame as it is through the store-and-forward path of the low-latency class when the SMD value of the received frame is "SMD-E" (Step **S103: Yes**). When Step **S103: No** is obtained and the SMD value of the received frame is "SMD-S" or "SMD-C", the coupling processing unit **61** temporarily stores the frame data in the storage unit for the general class in Step **S104**. When the received frame is divided (Step **S104: Yes**), the coupling processing unit **61** couples divided fragments in Step **S105** and performs transfer in the unit of a frame through the store-and-forward path of the general class. When the received frame is not divided (Step **S104: No**), the coupling processing unit **61** performs transfer in the unit of a frame through the store-and-forward path of the general class without performing the coupling process. The coupling processing unit **62** is identical to the coupling processing unit **61**.

In Step **S106**, the switching processing unit **71** receives a frame through the cut-through path from the reception unit **31a**. The switching processing unit **71** receives a frame through the store-and-forward path from the coupling processing unit **61**. The switching processing unit **71** receives a frame through the cut-through path from the reception unit **32a**. The switching processing unit **71** receives a frame through the store-and-forward path from the coupling processing unit **62**. The switching processing unit **71** receives a

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frame through the store-and-forward path from the reception unit **33a**. The switching processing unit **71** receives a frame through the store-and-forward path from the reception unit **34a**. The switching processing unit **71** multiplexes frames received through the store-and-forward path and allocates the frames to the store-and-forward storage unit of each output port.

For example, when a frame is received from the reception unit **31a** and the frame is to be transferred to the port **102** by cut-through, the switching processing unit **71** transmits the frame to the cut-through storage unit **92a**.

For example, when a frame is received from the reception unit **31a** and the frame is to be transferred to the port **102** by store-and-forward, the switching processing unit **71** transmits the frame to the store-and-forward storage unit **82a**.

In Step **S107**, the cut-through storage unit **91a** stores therein a frame that is transmitted from the switching processing unit **71** and that is to be transferred by cut-through. The cut-through storage unit **91a** transmits to the transmission unit **41a**, a transmission request indicating that a frame is located in the cut-through storage unit **91a** and can be transmitted, when a predetermined number of bytes from the head of the frame are stored therein. The predetermined number of bytes is, for example, 6 bytes, 64 bytes or the like. The transmission request is, for example, a level signal indicating whether there is a frame to be transmitted. The cut-through storage unit **92a** has functions identical to those of the cut-through storage unit **91a**.

In Step **S107**, the store-and-forward storage unit **81a** stores therein frames that are transmitted from the switching processing unit **71** and are to be transferred by store-and-forward. The store-and-forward storage unit **81a** manages and stores frames input with respect to each of a plurality of priority classes in the order of inputting. The store-and-forward storage unit **81a** transmits to the transmission unit **41a**, a transmission request indicating that transmission is possible, when one or more frames are located in the store-and-forward storage unit **81a**. The transmission request is, for example, a level signal indicating whether there is a frame to be transmitted. When a transmission permission is issued from the transmission unit **41a**, the store-and-forward storage unit **81a** preferentially transmits frames of a higher priority class among the stored frames to the transmission unit **41a**. When transmitting frames, the store-and-forward storage unit **81a** notifies the transmission unit **41a** also of the class information of the frames and frame information such as the frame length. The class information of a frame and the frame length may be stored in the header of the frame or in a portion being the leading fragment of data. The store-and-forward storage unit **81a** starts or stops transmission on the basis of whether there is a transmission permission from the transmission unit **41a**. The store-and-forward storage units **82a** to **84a** have functions identical to those of the store-and-forward storage unit **81a**. However, the store-and-forward storage units **83a** and **84a** may only transmit frames of a higher priority class preferentially in the order of inputting according to transfer rates of the corresponding output ports, without transmitting a transmission request. In this case, notification of the frame information is unnecessary.

In Step **S108** the transmission unit **41a** receives the transmission request. The transmission unit **41a** transmits a frame transmission permission to the cut-through storage unit **91a** or the store-and-forward storage unit **81a**. The transmission unit **41a** receives a frame from the cut-through storage unit **91a** or the store-and-forward storage unit **81a** to which the transmission permission has been transmitted.

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The transmission unit **41a** transmits a frame of the low-latency class or a frame of the general class in either the cut-through storage unit **91a** or the store-and-forward storage unit **81a** to which the transmission permission has been transmitted, to the terminal device **21**. While the transmission unit **42a** is identical to that of the transmission unit **41a**, a device connected to the transmission port **102** is the transfer device **12a**.

In Step **S108**, the transmission unit **43a** may receive or may not receive a transmission request. In a case of receiving a transmission request, the transmission unit **43a** transmits a frame transmission permission to the store-and-forward storage unit **83a**. The transmission unit **43a** receives a frame from the store-and-forward storage unit **83a**. The transmission unit **43a** transmits a frame of the low-latency class or a frame of the general class to the terminal device **22**. In a case of not receiving a transmission request, if the transmission unit **43a** receives a frame from the store-and-forward storage unit **83a**, the transmission unit **43a** transmits the received frame. The transmission unit **44a** is identical to the transmission unit **43a**.

FIG. **12** is a flowchart illustrating an operation of the reception unit **31a** in the transfer device **11a** according to the first embodiment of the present invention. The operation in Step **S101** in FIG. **11** is explained in detail below with reference to FIG. **12**.

The allocation unit **314a** receives a frame of the low latency class or a frame of the general class from the terminal device **21**, and the input-port identification unit **311** identifies type information of the input port to which the frame has been input in Step **S201**. In the first embodiment, the type information of an input port is an input port number. The input-port identification unit **311** stores therein that the input port number is the port **101** in advance. The input-port identification unit **311** outputs information of the port **101** as the type information of the input port to the allocation unit **341a**. The input-port identification units **311** of the reception units **32a** to **34a** perform operations identical to those of the input-port identification unit **311** of the reception unit **31a**.

In Step **S202**, the class identification units **312a** and **312b** identify whether the received frame is a frame of the low-latency class or a frame of the general class on the basis of the storage information in the received frame. The class identification unit **312a** of the reception unit **31a** in FIG. **5** indicates a case of not referring to the class table, and the class identification unit **312b** of the reception unit **33a** in FIG. **6** indicates a case of referring to the class table.

FIG. **13** is a diagram illustrating a class identification method based on an SMD value performed by the class identification unit **312a**.

In FIG. **13**, the SMD value is used as storage information in a received frame.

The class identification unit **312a** identifies a received frame as a frame of the low-latency class, when the SMD value being the storage information in the frame is SMD-E as illustrated in FIG. **13**. The class identification unit **312a** identifies a received frame as a frame of the general class, when the SMD value being the storage information in the frame is SMD-S or SMD-C.

FIG. **14** is a diagram illustrating an example of the class table **51**.

The class table **51** illustrated in FIG. **14** is a table that uses destination IP addresses as the storage information in received frames and associates the destination IP addresses of received frames and class information of the frames with each other.

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The class identification unit **312b** refers to the class table **51** illustrated in FIG. **14** and identifies a received frame as the low-latency class when the destination IP address being the storage information in the frame is AA.AA.AA.AA, and identifies a received frame as a frame of the general class when the destination IP address is CC.CC.CC.CC. The storage information in a frame to be associated with the class in the class table **51** is not limited to the destination IP address. Plural types of storage information in a frame can be combined to be associated with a class. Each of the classes associated with the storage information can include a plurality of classes as long as the classes are sorted into the low-latency class and the general class.

One class table **51** can be installed on the device or can be installed on each of the reception units.

Returning to Step **S202** in FIG. **12**, the class identification unit **312a** outputs the class information of the frame to the allocation unit **314a**. The class information is either the low-latency class or the general class. The class identification unit **312a** of the reception unit **32a** performs operations identical to those of the class identification unit **312a** of the reception unit **31a**. The class identification unit **312b** outputs the class information of the frame to the allocation unit **314b**. The class information is either the low-latency class or the general class. The class identification unit **312b** of the reception unit **34-a** performs operations identical to those of the class identification unit **312b** of the reception unit **33a**.

In Step **S203**, the output-port decision unit **313** decides an output port of the frame received from the terminal device **21**. The output-port decision unit **313** decides an output port to which the received frame is to be transferred, referring to the destination resolution table **52** based on the storage information in the received frame.

While an example of the destination resolution table **52** is a general layer-2 switch FDB table that decides an output port on the basis of the destination MAC address, VLAN (Virtual Local Area Network) tag information, or the like in the frame, the destination resolution table **52** is not particularly limited thereto as long as it is a table for deciding an output port. The output-port decision unit **313** outputs the output port information decided by the destination resolution table **52** to the allocation unit **314a**. The output port may be a plurality of ports.

The output-port decision units **313** in the reception units **32a** to **34a** perform operations identical to those of the output-port decision unit **313** in the reception unit **31a**.

In Step **S204**, the allocation unit **314a** receives the type information of the input port, the class information of the frame from the class identification unit **312a**, and the output port information from the output-port decision unit **313**.

The allocation unit **314a** decides whether to transfer the frame through the store-and-forward path or the cut-through path on the basis of the type information of the input port, the class information of the frame, and the output port information, and allocates the frame to the decided pathway. The cut-through path transfers only frames of the low-latency class and has one input port associated with one output port.

FIG. **15** is an example illustrating output ports for input ports that transfer frames by cut-through according to the first embodiment.

The allocation unit **314a** has stored therein association of output ports with input ports that transfer frames by cut-through as a bitmap as illustrated in FIG. **15**. The output port bitmap of FIG. **15** corresponds to the port **101**, the port **102**, the port **103** and the port **104** from the right and indicates that cut-through is done for a port having a value "1". The

transfer device **11a** sets in advance input ports that transfer by cut-through to each of the output ports. Therefore, only one of the input ports has a value "1" with respect to each of the output ports in the output port bitmap. The transfer device **11a** does not need to have cut-through storage units as many as the input ports and therefore transfer control is easier. Further, an increase in the circuit scale can be prevented. In the first embodiment, transferring by cut-through is possible in transferring from the port **101** to the port **102** and in transferring from the port **102** to the port **101**. While transferring by cut-through is possible in both directions between the port **101** and the port **102** in the first embodiment, it is acceptable that, for example, transferring by cut-through is possible only in transferring from the port **101** to the port **102** and transferring by cut-through is not possible in transferring from the port **102** to the port **101**. Any ports can be used for transferring by cut-through. However, transferring by cut-through from a plurality of input ports to one output port is not acceptable. Transferring by cut-through from only one input port to a plurality of output ports is acceptable.

The allocation unit **314a** checks the type information of the input port and the output port against FIG. **15** with respect to a frame of the low-latency class being a target frame. When the check is satisfied, the allocation unit **314a** transfers the target frame to the cut-through path. When the class information of a frame is the general class or the check is not satisfied even if the class information is the low-latency class, the allocation unit **314a** transfers the target frame through the store-and-forward path.

When transferring a frame, the allocation unit **314a** provides the class information and the output port information of the target frame. The information can be stored in the header or data of the frame and the way of providing the information is not particularly limited as long as the information can be managed in units of frames on a one-to-one basis.

Return to Step **S204** in FIG. **12**. The allocation unit **314a** of the reception unit **32a** performs operations identical to those of the allocation unit **314a** of the reception unit **31a**.

The allocation unit **314b** of the reception unit **33a** or the reception unit **34a** performs operations identical to those of the allocation unit **314a** of the reception unit **31a**. However, since the cut-through is not set to a pathway including the input port **103** or the input port **104** in FIG. **15**, frames are allocated to the store-and-forward path no matter whether the class information of the frames is the low-latency class or the general class.

FIG. **16** is a flowchart illustrating an operation of the transmission unit **41a** of the transfer device **11a** according to the first embodiment of the present invention. The operation in Step **S108** in FIG. **11** is explained in detail below with reference to FIG. **16**.

In Step **S301**, the class extraction unit **412** receives a frame stored in the cut-through storage unit **91a**. The class extraction unit **412** extracts the class information stored in the frame by the allocation unit **314a** from the frame. The class extraction unit **412** outputs the extracted class information of the frame to the IET-output control unit **411a**. The class extraction unit **412** of the transmission unit **42a** performs operations identical to those of the class extraction unit **412** of the transmission unit **41a**.

In Step **S302**, the IET-output control unit **411a** outputs a frame received from the cut-through storage unit **91a**. The IET-output control unit **411a** also outputs a frame received from the store-and-forward storage unit **81a**. The IET-output control unit **411a** decides whether to divide the frame stored

in the store-and-forward storage unit **81a** on the basis of the class information of the frame to be transferred by store-and-forward. When the frame is to be divided, the IET-output control unit **411a** divides and outputs the frame. The IET-output control unit **411a** of the transmission unit **42a** is identical to that of the transmission unit **41a**. Details of the IET-output control units **411a** of the transmission units **41a** and **42a** and the output control units **411b** of the transmission units **43a** and **44a** are explained later.

FIG. **17** is a flowchart illustrating an operation of the IET-output control unit **411a** of the transmission unit **41a** in the transfer device **11a** according to the first embodiment of the present invention. The operation in Step **S302** in FIG. **16** is explained in detail below with reference to FIG. **17**.

The IET-output control unit **411a** starts processing when a transmission request is received from the cut-through storage unit **91a** or the store-and-forward storage unit **81a**.

In Step **S401**, the IET-output control unit **411a** receives a transmission request from the cut-through storage unit **91a**. If the IET-output control unit **411a** has received the transmission request from the cut-through storage unit **91a**, the IET-output control unit **411a** determines that a frame of the low-latency class is stored in the cut-through storage unit **91a**. Therefore, Step **S401: Yes** is obtained and the process proceeds to Step **S404**. If the IET-output control unit **411a** has received no transmission request from the cut-through storage unit **91a**, the IET-output control unit **411a** determines that no frame of the low-latency class is stored in the cut-through storage unit **91a**. Accordingly, Step **S401: No** is obtained and the process proceeds to Step **S402**. Step **S401** of the IET-output control unit **411a** in the transmission unit **42a** is identical to that in the transmission unit **41a**.

In Step **S402**, when the IET-output control unit **411a** transmits a frame transmission permission to the store-and-forward storage unit **81a** or when it is determined that the IET-output control unit **411a** stops frame transfer by the IET and a frame stored in the store-and-forward storage unit **81a** is being transferred, Step **S402: Yes** is obtained and the process proceeds to Step **S403**. When the IET-output control unit **411a** transmits no transmission permission to the store-and-forward storage unit **81a** and when the IET-output control unit **411a** does not stop transfer of a frame from the store-and-forward storage unit **81a**, Step **S402: No** is obtained and the process proceeds to Step **S409**. Step **S402** of the IET-output control unit **411a** in the transmission unit **42a** is identical to that in the transmission unit **41a**.

In Step **S409**, if the IET-output control unit **411a** has received a transmission request from the store-and-forward storage unit **81a**, the IET-output control unit **411a** determines that a frame is stored in the store-and-forward storage unit **81a**, Step **S409: Yes** is obtained and the process proceeds to Step **S410**. If the IET-output control unit **411a** has received no transmission request from the store-and-forward storage unit **81a**, Step **S409: No** is obtained and the process returns to Step **S401**. Step **S409** of the IET-output control unit **411a** in the transmission unit **42a** is identical to that in the transmission unit **41a**.

In Step **S410**, when the IET-output control unit **411a** determines that a frame stored in the store-and-forward storage unit **81a** and to be transferred first is a frame of the low-latency class, Step **S410: Yes** is obtained and the process proceeds to Step **S411**. In Step **S411**, the IET-output control unit **411a** transmits a transmission permission to the store-and-forward storage unit **81a** and receives a frame from the store-and-forward storage unit **81a**. The IET-output control unit **411a** provides SMD-E as the SMD value in the header of the frame that is stored in the store-and-forward

storage unit **81a** and that is to be transferred first, and transfers a predetermined number of bytes of the received frame to the terminal device **21**. The predetermined number of bytes is, for example, 1 byte, 2 bytes or the like and is a period with which whether a frame has arrived at the cut-through storage unit **91a** is checked. After Step **S411**, the process returns to Step **S401**.

When the IET-output control unit **411a** determines in Step **S410** that a frame that is stored in the store-and-forward storage unit **81a** and that is to be transferred first is not a frame of the low-latency class, Step **S410**: No is obtained and the process proceeds to Step **S412**. In Step **S412**, the IET-output control unit **411a** transmits a transmission permission to the store-and-forward storage unit **81a** and receives a frame from the store-and-forward storage unit **81a**. The IET-output control unit **411a** provides SMD-S as the SMD value in the header of the received frame and transfers the predetermined number of bytes of the received frame to the terminal device **21**. The predetermined number of bytes is, for example, 1 byte, 2 bytes or the like and is a period with which whether a frame has arrived at the cut-through storage unit **91a** is checked. Transfer of the frame is started. After Step **S412**, the process returns to Step **S401**.

Step **S410** of the IET-output control unit **411a** in the transmission unit **42a** is identical to that in the transmission unit **41a**.

In Step **S403**, when the IET-output control unit **411a** transmits a frame transmission permission to the store-and-forward storage unit **81a**, the store-and-forward storage unit **81a** continuously transfers to the transmission unit **41a**, a frame that is being transferred. Alternatively, the store-and-forward storage unit **81a** resumes transfer to the transmission unit **41a** of a frame transfer of which has been stopped. The IET-output control unit **411a** receives the frame from the store-and-forward storage unit **81a** and transfers the predetermined number of bytes of the received frame to the terminal device **21**. The predetermined number of bytes is, for example, 1 byte, 2 bytes or the like and is a period with which whether a frame has arrived at the cut-through storage unit **91a** is checked. When a frame in the store-and-forward storage unit **81a** is being transferred, the IET-output control unit **411a** transfers to the terminal device **21**, the predetermined number of bytes of the frame being transferred. After Step **S403**, the process returns to Step **S401**. Since the IET-output control unit **411a** periodically checks whether a frame has arrived at the cut-through storage unit **91a**, the IET-output control unit **411a** can divide frames stored in the store-and-forward storage unit **81a** in the middle of transferring and preferentially transfer frames of the low-latency class to the cut-through storage unit **91a** even if it takes time to transfer all the frames stored in the store-and-forward storage unit **81a**. Step **S403** of the IET-output control unit **411a** in the transmission unit **42a** is identical to that of the transmission unit **41a**.

Meanwhile, in Step **S404**, if the IET-output control unit **411a** has transmitted a frame transmission permission to the store-and-forward storage unit **81a**, the IET-output control unit **411a** determines that a frame stored in the store-and-forward storage unit **81a** is being transferred and Step **S404**: Yes is obtained, so that the process proceeds to Step **S406**. If the IET-output control unit **411a** has transmitted no frame transmission permission to the store-and-forward storage unit **81a**, Step **S404**: No is obtained and the process proceeds to Step **S405**. Step **S404** of the IET-output control unit **411a** in the transmission unit **42a** is identical to that of the transmission unit **41a**.

When the frame class information input from the class extraction unit **412** is the low-latency class in Step **S406**, the TFT-output control unit **411a** determines that the frame stored in the store-and-forward storage unit **81a** and being transferred is a frame of the low-latency class and Step **S406**: Yes is obtained, so that the process proceeds to Step **S407**. When the frame class information is the general class, the IET-output control unit **411a** determines that the frame stored in the store-and-forward storage unit **81a** and being transferred is not a frame of the low-latency class and Step **S406**: No is obtained, so that the process proceeds to Step **S408**. Step **S406** of the IET-output control unit **411a** in the transmission unit **42a** is identical to that in the transmission unit **41a**.

In Step **S407**, the IET-output control unit **411a** transfers the frame that is stored in the store-and-forward storage unit **81a** and that is being transferred, up to the end of one frame, to the terminal device **21**. After Step **S407**, the process proceeds to Step **S405**. Step **S407** of the IET-output control unit **411a** in the transmission unit **42a** is identical to that in the transmission unit **41a**.

In Step **S408**, the frame stored in the store-and-forward storage unit **81a** and being transferred is a frame of the general class. The IET-output control unit **411a** performs interrupt transfer of frames stored in the cut-through storage unit **91a**. In a frame having been divided by the IET, for example, the frame length of the trailing frame after division needs to be equal to or longer than a predetermined number of bytes, which is a minimum frame length of the Ethernet (registered trademark), and divided frames other than the trailing frame need to meet a minimum frame length specified to be equal to or larger than the predetermined number of bytes. The predetermined number of bytes is, for example, 6 bytes, 64 bytes or the like. The IET-output control unit **411a** stops transfer of a frame of the general class if the divisible condition described above is satisfied. After Step **S408**, the process returns to Step **S401**. Step **S408** of the IET-output control unit **411a** in the transmission unit **42a** is identical to that in the transmission unit **41a**.

Meanwhile, in Step **S405**, the IET-output control unit **411a** transmits a frame transmission permission to the cut-through storage unit **91a**. When the frame transmission is issued permission from the transmission unit **41a**, the cut-through storage unit **91a** transfers a frame to the transmission unit **41a**. The cut-through storage unit **91a** stores therein the predetermined number of bytes from the head of the frame and then transfers the frame. The IET-output control unit **411a** receives the frame from the cut-through storage unit **91a**. The IET-output control unit **411a** transfers all frames stored in the cut-through storage unit **91a** to the terminal device **21**. After Step **S405**, the process returns to Step **S401**. Step **S405** of the IET-output control unit **411a** in the transmission unit **42a** is identical to that in the transmission unit **41a**.

Since the output control unit **411b** of the transmission unit **43a** always transfers by store-and-forward, the output control unit **411b** transmits a frame transmission permission to the store-and-forward storage unit **83a** and receives a frame. The output control unit **411b** transfers the received frame to the terminal device **22**.

The output control unit **411b** of the transmission unit **44a** performs operations identical to those of the output control unit **411b** of the transmission unit **43a**.

The processing described above is repeated until there is a trigger for an end of the processing, such as turning OFF of a power source or execution of an end operation. With this processing, circuit scale of the low-latency transfer function

of the IET becomes a smaller and the cost can be reduced as compared to the conventional transfer devices. While it is assumed that the processing described above is repeated, only one time of the processing without repetition may suffice.

As described above, the transfer device **11a** according to the first embodiment includes the output-port decision unit **313** that decides, on the basis of storage information stored in a frame input, an output port to which the frame is output from among a plurality of ports, the allocation unit **314a** that associates an input port to which the frame is input with an output port from which a frame transferred by the cut-through method is output on a one-to-one basis, and allocates a first frame to a first pathway transferring by the cut-through method and allocates a second frame to a second pathway transferring by the store-and-forward method on the basis of the type information of an input port to which a frame has been input, the class information of the frame, and the output port decided by the output-port decision unit, and the IET-output control unit **411a** that outputs the first frame allocated to the first pathway from the output port, decides whether to divide the second frame on the basis of the class information of the second frame allocated to the second pathway, and outputs the second frame from the output port on the basis of decision. Therefore, the low-latency transfer function of the IET can be realized by simple control. The transfer device **11a** does not need cut-through storage units as many as input ports with respect to each output port and therefore the low-latency transfer function of the IET can be realized with circuit scale smaller than that in the conventional transfer devices, which reduces the cost. In a transfer device having three or more input/output ports, the low-latency transfer function of the IET can be realized by control simpler than that in the conventional transfer devices while frames requiring low latency are transferred with low latency.

In the transfer device **11a** according to the first embodiment, the IET-output control unit **411a** outputs the second frame without dividing the second frame, when the class information of the second class is the low-latency class. Therefore, even when a frame is transferred by store-and-forward, the frame can be transferred without being divided by IET output control, if the frame is of the low-latency class.

Further, in the transfer device **11a** according to the first embodiment, a pathway that is not set as a pathway that transfers by cut-through does not require a cut-through storage unit for a transmission unit and therefore the storage capacity can be reduced. Accordingly, decrease of the circuit scale and reduction of the cost can be achieved.

While the terminal devices **21** to **23** and the transfer device **12a** of FIG. 1 are connected to the transfer device **11a** according to the first embodiment described above, any number of terminal devices or transfer devices can be connected to the transfer device **11a** as long as the total number of connected devices is three or more. In this case, the numbers of the reception units, the transmission units, the coupling processing units, the cut-through storage units, the store-and-forward storage units, and the like also change according to the number of connected devices. Also the transfer device **11a** configured in this manner can achieve the effects of the first embodiment described above.

In the transfer system according to the first embodiment described above, the transfer device **11a** and the transfer device **12a** are connected and there is a pathway where frames pass through two transfer devices. However, there may be a pathway where frames pass through a plurality of

transfer devices. For example, when frames of the low-latency class are transmitted from the terminal device **22** to the terminal device **26** via the transfer device **12a**, frames are transferred by store-and-forward since a pathway to transfer frames from the terminal device **22** to the transfer device **12a** by cut-through is not set. However, if a pathway to transfer frames from the transfer device **12a** to the terminal device **26** by cut-through is set, transfer latency of frames in the second transfer devices and subsequent transfer devices can be reduced. Particularly, frames passing through many transfer devices and requiring low latency can be transferred with low latency.

Further, there can be a pathway where frames pass through only one transfer device. Also the transfer device **11a** configured in this manner can achieve the effects of the first embodiment described above.

In the transfer device **11a** according to the first embodiment described above, a pathway to transfer frames by cut-through is set between the port **101** connecting to the terminal device **21** and the port **102** connecting to the transfer device **12a**. However, for example, a pathway to transfer frames by cut-through can be set between the port **103** connecting to the terminal device **22** and the port **104** connecting to the terminal device **23**. A pathway to transfer frames by cut-through can be set between any ports. Also the transfer device **11a** configured in this manner can achieve the effects of the first embodiment described above.

In the transfer device **11a** according to the first embodiment described above, the allocation unit **314a** is a combination of an output-port decision unit and an allocation unit. However, the output-port decision unit and the allocation unit can be separate independent components. Also the transfer device **11a** configured in this manner can achieve the effects of the first embodiment described above.

In the transfer device **11a** according to the first embodiment described above, the IET-output control unit **411a** and the class extraction unit **412** are separate independent components. However, the IET-output control unit **411a** and the class extraction unit **412** can be combined. Also the transfer device **11a** configured in this manner can achieve the effects of the first embodiment described above.

In the transfer device **11a** according to the first embodiment described above, frames are classified into the low-latency class and the general class. However, frames of the low-latency class can be further classified according to the priorities. The transfer device **11a** can also classify frames of the general class according to the priorities. Further, the transfer device **11a** can classify frames according to priorities of output ports for the frames. The transfer device **11a** can have any number of sub-classes for classes of frames. Specifically, for example, in a case where frames of the low-latency class are classified according to the priorities, the transfer device **11a** can have cut-through storage units as many as the priority classes and can transfer frames in the descending order of the priorities of the low-latency classes when frames are transferred by cut-through. At this time, the transfer device **11a** separately stores class information indicating the sub-classes in the "data" of frames. Also the transfer device **11a** configured in this manner can achieve the effects of the first embodiment described above and further sub-classes can be added.

In the transfer device **11a** according to the first embodiment described above, the terminal devices **21** and **22** and the transfer devices **11a** and **12a** each include the MAC to which the IET technique is applied, to transfer frames of the low-latency class with low latency. Further, the transfer device **11a** uses the input port number as the type informa-

tion of input port. However, the transfer device **11a** may use IET-correspondence existence information of each port as the type information of input port, the IET-correspondence existence information being stored in each port in advance. That is, the IET-correspondence existence information is information indicating whether a device connected to a port corresponds to the IET. It is assumed in this case that only some of terminal devices and transfer devices include the MAC to which the IET technique is applied. The transfer device **11a** recognizes that the cut-through is set to only ports corresponding to the IET among ports. Also the transfer device **11a** configured in this manner can achieve the effects of the first embodiment described above.

In the transfer device **11a** according to the first embodiment described above, the terminal devices **21** and **22** and the transfer devices **11a** and **12a** each include the MAC to which the IET technique is applied, to transfer frames of the low-latency class with low latency. The transfer device **11a** uses the input port number as the type information of input port. However, the transfer device **11a** may use connected device information as the type information of input port. The connected device information is information indicating what is a device connected thereto, such as whether a device connected to an input port is a terminal device corresponding to the IET, a terminal device not-corresponding to the IET, a transfer device corresponding to the IET, or a transfer device not-corresponding to the IET. The connected device information may be set in the transfer device **11a** in advance or may be described in frames to be received. It is assumed in this case that only some terminal devices and transfer devices include the MAC to which the IET technique is applied. The transfer device **11a** recognizes that the cut-through is set only between devices corresponding to the IET. Also the transfer device **11a** configured in this manner can achieve the effects of the first embodiment described above.

In the transfer device **11a** according to the first embodiment described above, the terminal devices **21** and **22** and the transfer devices **11a** and **12a** each include the MAC to which the IET technique is applied, to transfer frames of the low-latency class with low latency. The transfer device **11a** uses the input port number as the type information of input port. However, the transfer device **11a** may use a combination of the IET-correspondence existence information of each port and the input port number as the type information of each input port, the IET-correspondence existence information being stored in each port in advance. Port numbers that correspond to the IET are known due to combining. It is assumed in this case that only some of terminal devices and transfer devices include the MAC to which the IET technique is applied. The transfer device **11a** recognizes that the cut-through is set to only ports having port numbers corresponding to the IET. Any combination of the type information of input port can be used. Also the transfer device **11a** configured in this manner can achieve the effects of the first embodiment described above.

In the transfer device **11a** according to the first embodiment described above, the terminal devices **21** and **22** and the transfer devices **11a** and **12a** each include the MAC to which the IET technique is applied, to transfer frames of the low-latency class with low latency. The class identification unit **312a** identifies the class of each frame on the basis of the destination IP address or the SMD value of the frame, being the storage information of the frame, and the class table **51**. However, the transfer device **11a** may also identify the class of the frame from the IET-correspondence existence information of each port, which is stored in each port

in advance. It is assumed in this case that only some of terminal devices and transfer devices include the MAC to which the IET technique is applied. The transfer device **11a** may also identify frames to be transferred between ports corresponding to the IET among ports, as frames of the low latency class, and identify frames to be transferred between ports including ports not corresponding to the IET, as frames of the general class. Also the transfer device **11a** configured in this manner can achieve the effects of the first embodiment described above.

In the transfer device **11a** according to the first embodiment described above, the class identification unit **312a** identifies the class of each frame on the basis of the destination IP address or the SMD value of the frame, being the storage information of the frame, and the class table **51**. However, the transfer device **11a** can use the destination MAC address, the transmission source MAC address, the priority of the VLAN, the priority of an Ethernet (registered trademark) frame, the type of the Ethernet (registered trademark), a part of header information of an IP packet, a logical port number, and the like, or information of a combination of a plurality thereof as the storage information of each frame. The information is not particularly limited as long as it is the storage information of each frame. Also the transfer device **11a** configured in this manner can achieve the effects of the first embodiment described above.

In the transfer device **11a** according to the first embodiment described above, the terminal devices **21** and **22** and the transfer devices **11a** and **12a** each include the MAC to which the IET technique is applied, to transfer frames of the low-latency class with low latency. Further, the class identification unit **312a** identifies the class of each frame on the basis of the destination IP address or the SMD value of the frame, being the storage information of the frame, and the class table **51**. However, the transfer device **11a** can also identify the class of each frame on the basis of a combination of IET-correspondence existence information of each port, which is stored in advance, the SMD value, and the class table **51**. It is assumed in this case that only some of terminal devices and transfer devices include the MAC to which the IET technique is applied. In a case where the SMD value is set to a frame although a device connected to a port is a device not corresponding to the IET technique, the transfer device **11a** determines the frame as an error and discards the frame. Therefore, the class can be also identified on the basis of the SMD value and the class table **51** after checking whether the device corresponds to the IET technique. Any combination of information for identifying the class of each frame can be used. Also the transfer device **11a** configured in this manner can achieve the effects of the first embodiment described above.

In the transfer device **11a** according to the first embodiment described above, the allocation unit stores the information of the class of each frame in the item of "data" of the frame and transmits the frame, thereby transmitting the class information of the frame to the class extraction unit **412**. However, frames can be managed using an identification number that can uniquely bind a frame and the class information with each other. Specifically, the transfer device **11a** assigns an identification number to each frame. The transfer device **11a** includes a table associating the identification numbers of frames and class information of each of the frames. When the class extraction unit **412** receives a frame, the transfer device **11a** may extract the class information on the basis of the identification number of the received frame and the table of the identification numbers of frames and the class information of each of the frames. The transfer device

11a can also transmit the class information to the class extraction unit 412 by storing the class information of each of frames in a queue in the order, instead of including the table of the identification numbers of frames and the class information of each of the frames. A unit that assigns an identification number to each frame is an example of an assigning unit. The table of the identification numbers of frames and the class information of each of the frames or a queue in which the class information of each frame is stored is an example of a binding unit. Also the transfer device 11a configured in this manner can achieve the effects of the first embodiment described above.

In the transfer device 11a according to the first embodiment described above, frames are allocated to the store-and-forward path of the low-latency class and to the store-and-forward path of the general class using the SMD values of the frames received by the coupling processing unit 61. However, frames may be also allocated to the store-and-forward path of the low-latency class and to the store-and-forward path of the general class on the basis of the classes identified according to the result of the class table. Also the transfer device 11a configured in this manner can achieve the effects of the first embodiment described above.

Second Embodiment

In the first embodiment, the reception units 31a to 34a store the class information in a received frame on the basis of the storage information of the received frame and transmit the frame, so that the transmission units 41a and 42a identify the class information of the frame. In a second embodiment, the class information of a received frame is transmitted in parallel to the frame. Accordingly, the effects of the first embodiment described above can be obtained. Other than this, the second embodiment is identical to the first embodiment. In the following descriptions, the configurations and operations described above are denoted by the same reference signs and redundant explanations thereof are omitted.

An operation of the reception unit 31a of the transfer device 11a is described.

The class information of a frame is input from the class identification unit 312a to the allocation unit 314a. At the time of transfer of the frame, the allocation unit 314a does not assign the frame with the class information and the output port information for the target frame. The allocation unit 314a transmits the received frame and a pulse signal indicating the class information received from the class identification unit 312a. The pulse signal is an example of parallel information. After transmitted from the allocation unit 314a, the pulse signal indicating the class information is transmitted to a transmission unit via a coupling processing unit, a switching processing unit, a cut-through storage unit, and a store-and-forward storage unit. Operations of the allocation unit 314a of the reception unit 32a and the allocation units 314b of the reception units 33a and 34a are identical to those of the allocation unit 314a of the reception unit 31a.

FIG. 18 is a functional block diagram of the transmission unit 41a in the transfer device 11a according to the second embodiment of the present invention.

The IET-output control unit 411a receives the pulse signal indicating the class information of a frame instead of receiving the class information from the class extraction unit 412.

FIG. 19 are diagrams illustrating an example in which the allocation unit 314a transmits the class information of frames as the pulse signal.

FIG. 19 are diagrams illustrating a relation between frames to be transmitted and the class information of the frames to be transmitted in parallel with the frames. FIG. 19(a) is a diagram illustrating, a relation between frames to be transmitted and time. FIG. 19(b) is a diagram illustrating a relation between signal values of the class information of frames and time.

It is assumed that the reception unit 31a receives a frame 1 of the low-latency class, a frame 2 of the general class, and a frame 3 of the low-latency class. When the class information of each of the frames is input from the class identification unit 312a, the allocation unit 314a transmits the frames as illustrated in FIG. 19(a) and transmits the pulse signals as illustrated in FIG. 19(b). The pulse signal indicates the low-latency class when it is "1", and indicates the general class when it is "0". For example, at times t1 to t2, the allocation unit 314a transmits the frame 1 of the low-latency class and transmits the pulse signal "1". As for the frame 2 of the general class, the allocation unit 314a transmits the frame 2 of the general class and transmits the pulse signal "0" at times t3 to t4.

While the pulse signal "1" indicates the low-latency class and the pulse signal "0" indicates the general class, the values can be freely selected. Further, signals other than the pulse signal can be used.

As described above, in the transfer device 11a according to the second embodiment, the allocation unit 314a creates the parallel information indicating the class information of an input frame and transmits the parallel information in parallel to the frame, and the IET-output control unit 411a acquires the class information from the parallel information. Therefore, effects identical to those of the first embodiment can be achieved without storing the class information in frames.

Third Embodiment

In the first embodiment, the IET-output control unit 411a provides SMD-E as the SMD value of each frame of the low-latency class no matter whether frames are to be transferred by cut-through or frames are to be transferred by store-and-forward. An embodiment in which SMD-E is provided as the SMD value of each frame of the low-latency class to be transferred by cut-through and SMD-S is provided as the SMD value of each frame of the low-latency class to be transferred by store-and-forward is described. In the following descriptions, the configurations and operations described above are denoted by the same reference signs and redundant explanations thereof are omitted.

FIG. 20 is a functional block diagram of the transfer device 11a according to a third embodiment of the present invention. The difference from the first embodiment is that the reception units 31a and 32a refer to the class table 51.

FIG. 21 is a functional block diagram of the reception unit 31a in the transfer device 11a according to the third embodiment. The difference from the first embodiment is that the class identification unit 312a refers to the class table 51.

An operation of the transfer device 11a according to the third embodiment of the present invention is explained next.

FIG. 22 is a flowchart illustrating an operation of the transfer device 11a according to the third embodiment of the present invention.

Steps S501 and S502 are identical to Steps S101 and S102 in the first embodiment.

In Step S503, the coupling processing unit 61 receives the frame from the reception unit 31a through the store-and-forward path. When the received frame is a frame of the

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low-latency class (Step S503: Yes), the coupling processing unit 61 transfers the frame as it is through the store-and-forward path of the low-latency class. When Step S503: No is obtained and the received frame is not a frame of the low-latency class, the process proceeds to Step S504.

Steps S504 to S507 are identical to Steps S104 to S107 in the first embodiment. Step S508 is described later.

FIG. 23 is a flowchart illustrating an operation of the transmission unit 41a of the transfer device 11a according to the third embodiment of the present invention. An operation in Step S508 in FIG. 22 is explained with reference to FIG. 23.

Steps S601 to S609 are identical to Steps S401 to S409 in FIG. 17 in the first embodiment.

In Step S610, when the IET-output control unit 411a determines that a frame that is stored in the store-and-forward storage unit 81a and that is to be transferred first is the low-latency class, Step S610: Yes is obtained and the process proceeds to Step S611. In Step S611, the IET-output control unit 411a transmits a transmission permission to the store-and-forward storage unit 81a and receives a frame from the store-and-forward storage unit 81a. The IET-output control unit 411a provides SMD-S as the SMD value in the header of the received frame and transfers a predetermined number of bytes of the received frame to the terminal device 21. The predetermined number of bytes is, for example, 1 byte, 2 bytes or the like and is a period with which whether a frame has arrived at the cut-through storage unit 91a is checked. Transfer of the frame is started. After Step S611, the process returns to Step S601.

In Step S610, when the IET-output control unit 411a determines that a frame stored in the store-and-forward storage unit 81a and to be transferred first is not the low-latency class, Step S610: No is obtained and the process returns to Step S601.

The transfer devices and the transfer methods illustrated in the embodiments described above are only examples. The transfer devices and the transfer methods can be combined as appropriate and are not limited only to the configurations of the embodiments. The class information of a received frame can be transmitted in parallel to the frame as in the second embodiment.

As described above, in the transfer device 11a of the first embodiment, when outputting a frame that is the low-latency class and that is decided to be transferred by store-and-forward, the IET-output control unit 411a outputs the frame while the SMD value of the frame is set as SMD-S indicating the general class and information designating a class indicating a priority different from the SMD value as the low-latency class is stored in the frame. Therefore, if the transfer device 12a has a class table identical to the class table in the transfer device 11a and identifies the class from the information stored in the "data" of the frame, instead of the SMD value, the frame is identified as a frame of the low-latency class after being transferred to the transfer device 12a and can be transferred by cut-through, even if "SMD-S" is set as the "SMD value" in the frame.

REFERENCE SIGNS LIST

1: transfer system; 11a, 12a: transfer device; 21 to 26: terminal device; 101 to 104: port; 31a to 34a: reception unit; 41a to 44a: transmission unit; 51: class table; 52: destination resolution table; 61 to 64: coupling processing unit; 71: switching processing unit; 81a to 84a: store-and-forward storage unit; 91a to 92a: cut-through storage unit; 111: bus; 112: input/output IF; 113: memory; 114: storage medium;

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115: CPU; 116: processing circuit; 311: input-port identification unit; 312a to 312b: class identification unit; 313: output-port decision unit; 314a to 314b: allocation unit; 411a: IET-output control unit; 411b: output control unit; 412: class extraction unit

The invention claimed is:

1. A transfer device comprising:

a plurality of input ports;

a plurality of output ports; and

processing circuitry configured to:

manage, as a managed input port, a predetermined input port among the plurality of input ports, the predetermined input port supporting a cut-through method, and being associated in advance with a single output port, among the plurality of output ports, for supporting the cut-through method, and when an Interspersing Express Traffic (MT) frame is received from the managed input port, decide whether or not to transfer the received frame by the cut-through method, based on both type information identifying a type of the managed input port of the received frame and type information identifying a type of the received frame,

when it is decided that the received frame is to be transferred by the cut-through method, transfer the received frame to a corresponding output port, which is the output port associated in advance with the managed input port, using a cut-through path which supports the cut-through method and which is set in advance as a pathway between the managed input port and the corresponding output port, among a plurality of pathways between the plurality of input ports and the plurality of output ports, and

manage the corresponding output port as a managed output port, and when the received frame has been transferred via the cut-through path, transmit the received frame from the managed output port by the cut-through method,

wherein the type information identifying the type of the managed input port includes at least one of IET-correspondence existence information, an input port number of the managed input port, and connected device information describing a device connected to the managed input port.

2. The transfer device according to claim 1,

wherein the processing circuitry decides that the received frame is to be transferred by the cut-through method when the received frame is a frame of a low-latency class for which low-latency transfer is required.

3. The transfer device according to claim 1,

wherein the processing circuitry may transfer a frame using a store-and-forward path which is a pathway supporting a store-and-forward method, among the plurality of pathways between the plurality of input ports and the plurality of output ports, and

wherein the processing circuitry manages, as the managed output port, the corresponding output port supporting the cut-through method and the store-and-forward method, and when a frame has been transferred via the store-and-forward path, determines a type of the frame transferred via the store-and-forward path, and when the frame is a frame of a low-latency class for which low-latency transfer is required, transmits the frame by the store-and-forward method from the managed output port without dividing the frame, and when the frame is a frame of a general class which is not the low-latency class, decides whether or not to divide the frame, and

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when it is decided that the frame of the general class is to be divided, divides the frame of the general class and transmits divided frames obtained as a result of dividing the frame by the store-and-forward method.

4. The transfer device according to claim 1,
wherein, the processing circuitry manages, as a store-and-forward managed input port, a predetermined input port not supporting the cut-through method but supporting the store-and-forward method among the plurality of input ports,

wherein the processing circuitry manages, as a store-and-forward managed output port, a predetermined output port not supporting the cut-through method but supporting the store-and-forward method among the plurality of output ports, and

wherein the processing circuitry transfers a frame received, using a store-and-forward path which is a pathway supporting the store-and-forward method between the store-and-forward managed input port and the store-and-forward managed output port, among the plurality of pathways between the plurality of input ports and the plurality of output ports.

5. A transfer method executed by a computer having a plurality of input ports and a plurality of output ports, the transfer method comprising:

managing, as a managed input port, a predetermined input port among the plurality of input ports, the predetermined input port supporting a cut-through method, and being associated in advance with a single output port, among the plurality of output ports, for supporting the cut-through method, and when an Interspersing Express Traffic (IET) frame is received from the managed input port, deciding whether or not to transfer the received frame by the cut-through method, based on both type information identifying a type of the managed input port of the received frame and type information identifying a type of the received frame;

transferring, when it is decided that the received frame is to be transferred by the cut-through method, the received frame to a corresponding output port, which is the output port associated in advance with the managed input port, using a cut-through path which supports the cut-through method and which is set in advance as a pathway between the managed input port and the corresponding output port, among a plurality of pathways between the plurality of input ports and the plurality of output ports; and

managing the corresponding output port as a managed output port, and when the received frame has been

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transferred via the cut-through path, transmitting the received frame from the managed output port by the cut-through method,

wherein the type information identifying the type of the managed input port includes at least one of IET-correspondence existence information, an input port number of the managed input port, and connected device information describing a device connected to the managed input port.

6. A transfer system comprising a plurality of transfer devices, each of the plurality of transfer devices including: a plurality of input ports; a plurality of output ports; and processing circuitry to

manage, as a managed input port, a predetermined input port among the plurality of input ports, the predetermined input port supporting a cut-through method, and being associated in advance with a single output port, among the plurality of output ports, for supporting the cut-through method, and when an Interspersing Express Traffic (IET) frame is received from the managed input port, decide whether or not to transfer the received frame by the cut-through method, based on both type information identifying a type of the managed input port of the received frame and type information identifying a type of the received frame,

when it is decided that the received frame is to be transferred by the cut-through method, transfer the received frame to a corresponding output port, which is the output port associated in advance with the managed input port, using a cut-through path which supports the cut-through method and which is set in advance as a pathway between the managed input port and the corresponding output port, among a plurality of pathways between the plurality of input ports and the plurality of output ports, and

manage the corresponding output port as a managed output port, and when the received frame has been transferred via the cut-through path, transmit the received frame from the managed output port by the cut-through method,

wherein the type information identifying the type of the managed input port includes at least one of IET-correspondence existence information, an input port number of the managed input port, and connected device information describing a device connected to the managed input port.

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